



Preface

The Book begins with a brief overview of the Kushana.

In the Book proper, general features, the technique of manufacturing, shape & size, metrology and coin denomination, obverse and reverse and legends on Kushana Coinage, have been dealt with in chapters. The Select Bibliography is given at the end.

I express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Prashant Srivastava, the person who gave me guidance, and to the Departments of A.I.H. & Archaeology and Anthropology at Lucknow University for their warm support and sense of family.

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Chapter 1

Political Background

The history of the Yue-chi tribe, which left its ancestral country in Chinese Turkestan and eventually established in Bactria in the second century B.C., is closely related to the topic of the origin of the Kushanas.

The Yue-chi exodus:

The accounts of Chang-Kien, who visited Yue-chi land in or around 125 B.C., provided early Chinese historians with information regarding the Yue-chi migration. The Chinese father of history, Ssu-ma-chiea (B.C.145), wrote of Chang-journeys Kien's in Chapter 123 of his famous book, the Sse-ki, or "Historical Record." Chang-Kien was dispatched on a mission to Yue-chi by Emperor Wu-ti (B.C.140–86). According to the historian, Yue-chi lived in Chinese Turkestan around 165 B.C. between the Tsenn-hoang region and the Ki-lien mountains, or Tien-Chan Range.

The Yue-chi and the Hiung-nu, two nomad hordes who lived on the fringes of the Chinese kingdom, engaged in battle in 165 B.C., which resulted in the former's total defeat and expulsion from their homeland. The Yue-chi then moved westward in quest of farms and pastures while leading their flocks and herds. They encountered the Wu-sun, another nomadic tribe, as they travelled. The Wu-sun were decimated in the ensuing conflict, and their chief Nan-teou-mi was killed. Following this, the Yue-chi, who was still pushing westward, attacked the Se or

Sok, who had fled their homeland and moved into Ki-pin to the south to join the Yue-chi.

Nevertheless, Kwen-mo, the murdered Wu-sun chief's son, had been raised under the Hiung-care nu's and attacked the Yue-chi to exact revenge. He was successful in pushing Yue-chi into Ta-hia or Bactria from their newly acquired territory. Ta-hia were a settled people who had lush territory to the right of the Oxus' northern rear. Ta-hia, who were focused on trade and untrained in combat, were rapidly and readily brought under control. North of the Oxus is where the Yue-chi erected their centre of government.

In the 96th Chapter of the History of the First Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 24), written by Pan-ku, the Chang-Kien journey as described by the Sse-ki, whose work was finished before B.C.91, is repeated with three significant additions:

- (1) Kien-chi (Lan-shan), the capital of the Yue-chi kingdom, is located on its southern frontier, and Ki-pin;
- (2) although having initially been nomads who followed their flocks and changed their territory with them, the Yue-chi were no longer nomads; and
- (3) the division of the Yue-chi Kingdom into five principalities.

The first of these five principalities was Hieoumi, with the town of Ho-me serving as its capital. Choung-mo, with the same-named capital town, came in second. Kouei-chouang (Kushana), with the town of Houtsao serving as its capital, was third. Hithun, with the town of Po-mao (Bamiyan) serving as its capital, was fourth. Kao-fu (Kabul), with The Ta-Yue-chi, had sovereignty over these five principalities.

According to Chapter 118 of Fan-Ye's HISTORY of the Second Han Dynasty (A.D. 25–220), "About a hundred years later the Koei-choang prince Kieou-tsieou-Kio, attacked and subjugated the other four principalities and made himself king of a kingdom which was called Koei-choung. This prince invaded the

country of the An-si (Parthians); he took possession of the territory of Kao-fu (Kabul); he destroyed also Po-ta and Ki-pin, and became completely the master of those countries. Kieou-tsieou-Kio died at the age of eighty. His son Yen-Kao-Chen ascended the throne. He conquered Tien-tenou (India) and there set up generals who governed in the name of the Yue-chi. From this time the Yue-chi became powerful. All the other countries designated them Kushana after their king, but the Han retained the old name and called them the Ta-Yue-chi".

Now, let us try to approximate the dates of the events occurring in the various stages of the Yue-chi migration, as indicated above. After their final defeat in 165 B.C., the Yue-chi migrated west, where they met the Wu-sun. The fight in which the Yue-chi defeated the Wu-sun may have occurred in B.C.163. The Yue-chi then clashed with Se or Sok. This most likely happened around the year 160 B.C. The Yue-chi were not permitted to remain in peaceful possession of the conquered lands. The son of the slain Wu-sun chieftain, who had grown to manhood, attacked them and drove them further west. Smith dates this event to B.C. 140 because it takes at least twenty years for an infant to mature into a man. However, an interval of ten or twelve years is sufficient to prepare a child of four or five years of age for fighting. Babar ascended to the throne when he was in his teens, and Akbar fought the Second Battle of Panipat before he was twenty. "Hence, it may not be improbable that it was in or about 150 B.C. that the Yue-chi were defeated by the son of the slain Wu-sun chieftain.¹ It has been suggested that the Yu-chi arrived in Ta-hia in 138 B.C.² However, according to the counting method used above, this should be 148 B.C.

Smith and Boyer make a distinction between the two phases of the Yue-chi's invasion of the Ta-hia. The Yue-chi did two things: first, they crossed the Oxus

¹ *I.A.* vol. 37, 1908, p. 32.

² *JRAS*, 1903, pp. 1-65.

River and eliminated the remnants of Greek power inside the province; second, they annexed the medieval Persian province of Soghdiana to the north of it while exerting great influence on the weak Bactrian town governors. However, it seems equally improbable that the Yue-chi stayed out of the business of ruling over weak people. They could not have stopped until they could fully displace and annihilate the people of Bactria since they had been pushed by their adversaries. Additionally, Bactria was presently politically divided. According to Chinese historians, the Bactrian people were unable to offer the Yue-chi any resistance when the internal conflicts between the two brothers Heliocles and Appollodotus ended. Therefore, it is very puzzling that the Central Asian hordes took so long to eliminate the weak.

The Second Han Dynasty Annals by Fan-ye contain the Yue-chi's next major achievement. It is believed that Kiu-tsiu-kio, ruler of Kou-chowang (Kushanas), attacked and conquered the other four kingdoms 100 years after the Yue-chi was divided into five groups. The Kujula Kadphises's coins have allowed for the identification of this Kiu-tsiu-kio. Kadphises I's accession is dated by Smith to 45 AD. Fan-ye dates the beginning of the Yue-chi kingdom in Bactria's division into five principalities more than a century after the start of his rule as a wang or king. The main idea of the Yue-chi next is found in the Second Han Dynasty Annals by Fan-ye. The coins of Kujula Kadphises have made it possible to identify this Kiu-tsiu-kio. Smith places the accession of Kadphises I in the year 45 AD. More than a century after Fan-ye's reign as a wang or king began, the Yue-chi kingdom in Bactria was divided into five principalities.

The Shi-ki and Tsien-Han-shu contain the earliest mentions of the Ta-hia. The older source states that Ta-hia is more than 200 miles southwest of Ta-wan (Ferghana) and south of the Wei Water (Oxus); the people had no suitable ruler, therefore the chiefs of the numerous towns were chosen by them.

According to Prof. Marquart's five principalities which were as, "Eransah" has identified Hiumi with the present Wakhan, Sheeangmi with Chitral, Kuei-Shuang with the country immediately to the north of Gandhara or with Gandhara itself, Hi-tun with Parwan on the Panjshir, and Kao-fu with Kabul. Tumi should perhaps be substituted for Kao-fu. The five principalities were outside the Ta-hia stronghold in Badakshan, and in districts which were not very distant from the route which the Sakas must have conquered to have followed on their way to Ki-pin.

The principality of the Kushana people, halfway between Chitral and the Panjshir country, Kuei-Shuang, was the third of these kingdoms. This Kuei-Shang principality developed a sizable dominion in India and the Indian boundaries.

Country of Origin of the Kushanas:

The Kushana princes were known as '*Tusharas*' in *Sanskrit*, or men of the snowy lands' in India. Tukhara was the spoken form of the name, which appears to be the origin of the Tacharoi of Strato and Ptolemy, the Tocharai of Pliny and Ammianus, and the Tu-ho-lo of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang. Tokharistan has kept the name. The name 'Kushana' appears in both inscriptions and coins.

Kanishka is referred to as a Turushka or Turk in Kalhana's *Rajtarangini* (*Turushkanvaya*). In the Manikyala Inscription, he is referred to as "the aggrandizer of the Gushana race" (*Samvardhaka Gushana Vamsa*). Al-beruni claimed that Raja Kanik was a descendant of Turki chief Barhatgin, the founder of the Shahiya rule in Kabul. He is also seen in sculptural art as dressed like a Turk, complete with a high hat and boots.

Kanishka's features, for example, are characteristic of the Turki nationality. He has a pointed cranium, salient cheekbones, a large, long, and heavy nose, and a thick beard. His coins represent him as a powerfully built barbarous, clad in the loose coat and huge boots which were the common dress of Turkestan.³ Cunningham⁴ is an advocate of the Turki nationality of the Kushanas, while Sten Konow⁵ tries to show that the Kushanas were of Saka origin.

Given that they came into touch with one another relatively early, as suggested by numismatic evidence, it is not unlikely that the Saka language had an influence on the Kushana language.

The coin image of Wema Kadphises served as the model of the monumental statue of Kanishka which was discovered at Mat near Mathura.⁶ As there existed no distinction between the Sakas and the Kushanas in costumes and arms, it might be suggested that these two peoples belonged to, or, were parts of that vast complex of nomadic tribes who are now usually called Sarmatians.⁷ First, the Saka coins show a preference for the worship of Herakles and offer no traces of the worship of Indian and Persian gods and goddesses, while the Kushanas, after Kujula Kadphises, adopted the "Sabianism of Bactria with a mixture of Indian worship."⁸ Secondly, the Saka coins are remarkable for the number of their monograms both in Greek and Kharosthi characters; an almost total absence of monograms on the Kushana coins is remarkable. Thirdly, while the Sakas did not issue a single gold coin but only silver money, the Kushana issued gold money with a few specimens of silver yielded by Marshall's excavations at Taxila.⁹

³ *JRAS*, 1912, p. 670.

⁴ *N. Chron.* Vol. XII 3rd Series, p. 40.

⁵ *CII*, Vol. II Pt. I *Introduction* I, III.

⁶ *JBROS*, Vol. 6, 1921, p. 121 ft.

⁷ *JAOS*, Vol. 61, 1941, p. 249-250.

⁸ *N. Chron.* IX 3rd Ser. p. 194.

⁹ Bhaskar Chattopadhyay 1967. *The Age of the Kushāṇas—A Numismatic Study*. Calcutta. p. 11.

Thus, the theory of Maenchen Halfen offers a solution to the issue of the nationality of the Kushanas. There is little question that the Kushanas were members of the Yue-chi stock. The Yue-chi were briefly brought under the Sakas' rule, at which time they may have absorbed part of the Saka influence in terms of their armour and weapons.

The moon was considered the patroness of fertility because it represented water, the universal mother. When the Central Asian hordes, the Kushanas, abandoned their predatory nature and began settled life, this aspect of the moon was most likely closely observed. The moon, according to primitive beliefs, is equally responsible for vegetable growth as the sun. The work done by the sun during the day was carried on by the moon at night, according to primitive beliefs. On some Kushana coins, we also see the representation of Mihira, the Sun-god, alongside the moon deity. From the perspective of the Kushana life, the emergence of the "Bull" and the god *Siva*, also known as "*Chandra Sekhara*," or "one bearing moon on the head," is undoubtedly very important. The "Bull-Bactrian Camel" type of coins likely reflects the fact that the Kushanas, who were content with an agricultural lifestyle heavily dependent on bulls, nonetheless had the "camel," or "the sheep of the desert," in their minds.

Coins Minted During the Yue-chi:

The coins of Hyrcodes and Sapadbizes etc. which contain Greek elements and bear resemblance to the coins of Miao at the same time seem to have belonged to the class of coins struck by the Yue-chi at some time subsequent to their settlement at

Bactria.¹⁰ These minor kings' reigns came to an end with the rise of Kujula Kadphises. The first Kushana monarch who had any military success, likely Miaus or Heraxus, made his illustrious successor Kujula powerful enough to invade the neighbouring kingdoms in the future. The obols of Miaus are similar to the coins of Hyrcodes both in fabric and portraiture.¹¹ One design of his coins had a bust of the king on the obverse and a standing deity with a spear in their right hand and flames on their shoulders on the back. Another kind features the king's bust on the obverse and the left forepart of a saddled horse on the reverse. The reversal mechanism was adapted from early Antiochi from Syria. Greek legends that are corrupt are featured on both the obverse and reverse of these coins. These coins have the bust of the monarch to the right, wearing a helmet resembling Eucratides. Their reverse features a standing, open-mouthed lion to the right and the goddess Nanaia's name (in Greek), whose likeness may be seen on many Kushana coins, including Kanishka, Huvishka, and Vasudeva. These mysterious kings most likely had ties to territories that the Greeks had once occupied. Miaus was the first Yue-chi chieftain to issue Greek coins. According to the legends on his coinage, he was a Kushana. Kadphises I may have inherited some ancestry from Miaus. He was either Kujula Kadphises's grandfather or his father, as well as his predecessor. Cunningham¹² suggested that this Miaus may be the adventurer Yin-mo-fu to whom the Chinese records attribute the conquest of Ki-pin. He claimed that Miaus was the leader of the Kushanas, a tribe of the Yue-chi, rather than a Saka ruler. He was presumably Kujula Kadphises's father and predecessor, who brought the five tribes of the mighty Yue-chi together. Ghirshman¹³ likewise backs the same viewpoint. Tarn opines that Miaus, a contemporary of Hermaeus, was the grandfather of Kujula

¹⁰ *Indian Coins*, p. 10.

¹¹ *B.M.C.* Pl. XXIV, 8-12.

¹² *N. Chron*, p. 51.

¹³ *Begram*, p. 116.

Kadphises who invaded the Paropanisadae, not as a foreign conqueror.¹⁴ Kadphises I declared himself as Greek and he was their legitimate monarch by hereditary descent from their previous king Hermaeus, whose relative (sister?) was married by the Kushana Miaus, he issued the Hermaeus-Kujula Kadphises coins.

The Saka ruler who entered Ki-pin under pressure from the Yue-chi was not Yin-mo-fu. The conquest of Ki-pin by Yin-mo-fu cannot, in any event, be dated earlier than 73 B.C., but the Sai-Wang began migrating far earlier and before the Chang-Kien embassy. Yin-mo-fu's rise in Ki-pin probably indicates the overthrow of the Saka King in that region and the establishment of a new dynasty,¹⁵ in his stead.

Ki-pin was likely temporarily taken over by Miaus. When Kujula Kadphises, his successor, took over, it was once again occupied. Miaus's contemporaries Hermaeus, the last Greek king, may have decided it was advantageous to form an alliance with him. Kadphises, the Kushana, as the leader of the Yue-chi tribes, was not unexpected as its foundations had been laid by his predecessor Miaus.¹⁶

¹⁴ *GBI*, p. 506.

¹⁵ *EECA*, p. 208.

¹⁶ Bhaskar Chattopadhyay 1967. *The Age of the Kushāṇas—A Numismatic Study*. Calcutta.

Chapter 2

General Features

The Hiung-nu (Hūṇa) tribe was exiled from its original homeland as a result of significant political unrest in Central Asia around 165 B.C. In turn, this tribe drove the Yueh-chih tribe from its original home in Tocharistan, a region of Central Asia. The Greater Yueh-Chih travelled through Seistan and Bactria to reach northwestern India, while the Little Yueh-Chih moved toward Tibet and settled there.

According to Chinese sources, the Yueh-chihs had five small principalities in Bactria. One of these principalities, Kouie-Chwang, was ruled by Kieou-t'sieu-k'io, who also assumed the title of King after uniting the other four. The first known ruler of Kouie-Chwang is identified as Kujula Kadphises, also known as Kushas and Kieou-t'sieu-k'io.

It is known that Kujula Kadphises ruled until he was past eighty. He was succeeded by his son, V'ima Kadphises, who is credited with establishing Kushana's dominance over some areas of modern-day India. Following him were the Kanishka group of kings, who according to some inscriptions, were related to the Kadphises group of kings.

In addition to his vast dominions in India, which reached as far east as *Vārāṇasī* and even farther, Kanishka I also took control of three Central Asian provinces: Kashgar, Yarkand, and Khotan. Vasishka, who succeeded him, doesn't seem to have ruled for very long; instead, Huvishka, Kanishka II, and Vasudeva I followed him. After Vasudeva I, the Kushana empire began to decline and fall apart, but the Kushaas remained a significant political force at least until about 350 A.D., when they are identified as *daivaputrashāhi shahānushāhi* in Samudragupta's Allahabad Pillar Inscription.

The Kushāṇas were the first rulers of India to issue coins abundantly in gold. 'The line of descent of the new (Kushaṇa gold) issue must be traced.... through the Roman aurei which were first issued in abundance by Augustus and which at the beginning of the Christian era made their way into India' 'Very few specimens of Kushana silver coins are known so far. While Kujula Kadphises struck exclusively in copper, subsequent Kushana rulers struck in copper, bronze and gold.¹⁷

The coins of the Kushāṇas are invariably round in shape. The gold coins of the Kushaṇas follow the weight standard of the Roman denarius aureus weighing 122.9 grains. They appear to have been struck in three denominations, viz, *double-dīnāra*, *dīnāra* and *quarter-dīnāra*.¹⁸

The average weight of Kushaa copper coins can be used to classify them into three groups. The small coins weigh about 65 grains, the large coins about 260 grains, and the medium coins about 130 grains.

The die-striking method has only been used to produce Kushana coins. They are not perfectly round, just like the Saka-Pahlava coins, because the mint masters did not use the shape-controlling collar when the coins were struck.

The Yavana Hermaios' name and/or bust are on the first editions of Kujula Kadphises. Cunningham hypothesized that Hermaios had formed an alliance against the Saka-Pahlavas based on these coins, most likely a matrimonial one in which he wed his daughter to Kujula Kadphises. But after a while, the Kushana chief protected Hermaios and reduced him to "a mere pageant king," which ultimately "subverted the Greek dominion in India."

Whitehead, Smith, and many others agreed with Cunningham's theory. However, F. W. Thomas drew attention to the fact that there was a time interval between

¹⁷ Prashant Srivastava, *Coins of Ancient India*, pp 182.

¹⁸ *Ibid*

Hermaios and Kadphises I when the Pahlavas ruled the Kabul Valley, and as a result, some scholars believe that these coins are mechanical copies of Hermaios' coins by Kujula Kadphises.

Tarn once suggested that these pieces were issued by Kadphises I to proclaim that "he is related by blood to Hermaeus in order to make himself more acceptable to the Greeks of that country," but he gave up this view later on.

Kujula Kadphises also issued a type bearing his helmeted head on the obverse and 'Macedonian soldier' on the reverse and another type showing a bull on the obverse and camel on the reverse.¹⁹

The standing king wearing a long coat, boots, and tall cap, sacrificing animals with his right hand at an altar, first appears on coins during the reign of V'ima Kadphises. The coins issued by Kanishka and Vasudeva I, as well as succeeding kings, continued to feature this obverse design. However, the king is never depicted standing on Huvishka's coins.

The obverse of this monarch's gold coins features his half-length effigy, while the obverse of his copper coins depicts him sitting cross-legged on cushions, lounging on a couch, or riding an elephant. On a copper type of Kanishka, for example, a king is depicted atop his throne.

Among the Kushāṇa rulers of the Kanishka group, the only bi-lingual coin is possibly a copper issue of Huvishka. The obverse of the coins of these rulers either bears a Greek legend in Greek script or a Graeco-Kushāṇa legend in Greek script. Thus, some coins of Kanishka I bear the legend *Basileus Basileon Kaneshkou*, while others bear legends like *Shao Kaneshki*, *Shaonano Shao Kaneshki Koshano* or *Shaonano Kaneshki Koshano*. The reverse legend on the coins of these rulers gives the name of the deity depicted. For instance, we have reverse legends like

¹⁹ Prashant Srivastava, *Coins of Ancient India*, pp 183

Nana, Erakilo, Ommo, Ardochsho, etc.²⁰

The vast array of gods depicted on Kusha coins makes them fascinating. The Buddha (?) image on the obverse of a copper type of Kadphises I is most likely the only exception to the rule that these deities always appear on the reverse. The Greek gods Herakles and (likely) Zeus are depicted on Kujula Kadphises' coins.

The appearance of the title *dhramathita* on his coins would appear to reveal his Buddhist leanings. The reverse of the coins of Vima Kadphises bears invariably a Saiva device; either *Śiva* alone or with bull or only his attribute *triśula-paraśu*. The devices and the epithet *māhisvara* for Vima Kadphises testify to his Saivite inclination.

Graeco-Roman, Indian, Persian, and Central Asian gods are represented in an "extensive gallery" on the reverse of the coins of Kanishka I and Huvishka, along with their names. The iconographic features of these deities aren't faithfully portrayed with much care. If these coins had been anepigraphous, Gardner says, "their interpretation would have stumped all ingenuity."

The Sun God, Elios, Erakilo (Herakles), the War God, Shaoreoro, Serapis, Uron (Ouranos), and the Goddess Nana are just a few of the Greek or semi-Greek deities that can be found on Kushna coins. The divine blacksmith Ephaistos is known as Nanashao or Nanaia. The names Helios, Selene, and Hephaistos appear to be misnomers. Helios is generally represented in Greek art as driving a quadriga, but on these Kushāna coins, he is not distinguishable from the Zoroastrian counterpart, Miirō (Mihira). Selene is the Greek moon-goddess, but on Kushana coins Selene is a male god not unlike the Zoroastrian Māo. It is believed by certain scholars that these three "are not Greek divinities at all, but popular indigenous divinities under

²⁰ Prashant Srivastava, *Coins of Ancient India*, pp 183

Greek names and a Greek disguise".²¹

The Zoroastrian deities which form the most represented creed on Kushana coins include the fire-god Athsho, the moon-god Mao and Manao Bago (Bahumana); the Sun-god Miuro, Mioro, Meiro; Lrooaspo (Luhrasp); the goddess of victory (?) Oaninda; the wind-god Oado (Vato); the war-god Orlagno (Veretraghna); mention is also made of Pharro, the deity holding out the fire; Ardochsho apparently the Persian equivalent of the Roman goddess of plenty.²²

While only Oesho (Siva) and Sakaymo Boddo (*Sakyamuni Buddha*) of the Indian divinities appear on the coins of Kanishka 1, the list of Indian divinities becomes more extensive on the coins of Huvishka. Thus we have representations of Ommo (Uma) with her consort Siva. Skando Komaro (*Skanda-Kumāra*), Bizago (Visakha) and Maaseno (*Mahāsena*) are today known as the names of Kārttikeya but they have been shown as three different deities (*Skanda-Kumāra* being treated as one). Great variety is seen in the representation of Siva on Kushana coins. He is either monocephalous or polycephalous, two-handed or multi-handed. The attributes in the hands of the deity vary. Certain scholars regard Ardochsho as Greek transcription of *Ardha-ugra*, half or consort of *Śiva*, i.e. Parvati.²³

Some interpret it to be *Ardheya Yakshi*. Buddha is depicted either standing or sitting cross-legged.

Oesho, Ardochsho, and Nana are all depicted on the reverse of Vasudeva I coins. The last of these is the one that vanishes from the coins of the succeeding Kushana kings.

According to some academics, the depiction of gods from so many different pantheons on the coins of the Kushnas demonstrates that these kings were infused

²¹ Prashant Srivastava, *Coins of Ancient India*, pp 183

²² *Ibid*

²³ *Ibid*

with eclecticism. Rapson initially held the same opinion, but later changed his mind, believing that it merely described the vast dominions of the Great Kushanas, the gods who served as the tutelary divinities of the mint cities.

Kennedy holds the opinion that the coins of Kanishka I and Huvishka were minted not to satisfy local needs but rather for the purpose of foreign (Chinese silk) trade, and that the inhabitants of Kashmir, Kabul, and Arachosia served as middlemen between these Messenian merchants and the Chinese. He asserts that the majority of these deities are connected to the religions of these traders and their middlemen.

Chapter 3

Technique of Manufacturing, Shape and Size

The standard metal, weight, and denomination of the Kushana coins, as well as their typology, iconography, and historical significance, are among their distinguishing characteristics. Although there were significant deviations from the Indo-Greek influence in other areas, the tradition of Indo-Greek coinage was followed in some areas. Both significant innovations and new traditions were attempted.

The initial procedures were faithfully carried out in accordance with the previous coinage. Existing coins were copied, and nearly identical coins were also produced. Soon, Kushanas used the die-strike technique to coin precious metals like gold and copper into circular designs and shapes bearing their own names, effigies, and styles. The king was depicted on the obverse of their original coins, just like the Indo-Greeks, and a deity preferably a Greek God was depicted on the reverse. These coins are all bilingual, with Kharosthi written on the reverse and Greek text on the obverse.

A great deal of effort has been expended attempting to establish the purity of Kushana gold coins. The first tests were undertaken by Alexander Cunningham (1894: 16). He reported the results as averages only with no indication of the method employed. It is not stated which gold coins he used for the analysis but Cunningham had been the Director General of the Archaeological Survey and collected an enormous number of coins, many of which were subsequently acquired by the British Museum (BM), so these results probably relate to coins now in the BM. His conclusion was that the gold content of Kushana coins was stable at about 91.7% (112.75 grains in 123 grains) from the introduction of gold

coinage (c.110 AD) until the time of Vasudeva (AD 190-231) when there was a slight reduction in purity.²⁴

Cunningham's conclusions stood for half a century before Maity (1958) undertook specific gravity (SG) measurements. SG is a measure of the mass of a given volume of a material relative to the mass of an equal volume of water. It is measured by applying Archimedes' Principle and weighing the object (coin) in air and again when immersed in a liquid of known density (see Method below). Pure gold has a much higher specific gravity (19.32) than silver (10.50) or copper (8.91) so as the gold content of a coin is reduced by the addition of silver and/or copper its specific gravity falls as well. Maity made measurements of 99 coins in the Indian Museum Calcutta (IMC), excluding those with holes or attachments. This is about two-thirds of the collection in that museum and the results were published with both an IMC catalogue number and an SG for each coin. The study established, contrary to Cunningham's results, that Kushana gold coins were gradually debased over time. Maity (1970: 74) was not alone in making SG examinations, and he also reported measurements on eleven Vasudeva coins in the British Museum which had been analysed by John Walker in 1955.²⁵

B N Mukherjee (1978) took up the issue from Maity and arranged for more measurements. He asked Miss Jaya Goswami to re-examine the coins in the IMC and Mr K A Howes to analyse the BM collection of late Kushana coins. The analysis of 149 coins from Calcutta, almost the entire collection, and 56 late Kushana coins from the BM made this the largest sample to date. However, the final report lacked a standard approach. IMC coins have catalogue references which makes it possible to compare the results directly with those produced by

²⁴ The results are misreported in Maity (1970) actually misreports the results, from 64 coins, and omits the results Cunningham gives for Kanishka II, Shaka, and the Kidarite coins, which do show a general debasement.

²⁵ R.Bracey and W.A Oddy, *The analysis of Kushana period gold coins by Specific Gravity*, pp 1

Maity. Howes' results have an experimental number which was recorded on a ticket with the coin. Unfortunately, not all of the tickets survive so it is not always possible to link coins to results.²⁶

The results published by Mukherjee added further evidence that the Kushana coins were gradually debased over time. However, the coins of the post-Vasudeva rulers were poorly studied. The attributions from Vasudeva onwards are not always accurate, and although these can be corrected for the IMC coins, most of which have an IMC number, it is not always possible for the BM coins, which make up the majority of the post-Vasudeva sample.²⁷

Apart from the lack of standardisation in the report, there is an issue with the precision of the results. The average discrepancy between recent tests and those of Howes is 0.43.²⁸ If these SGs were used to determine the gold content, they could result in errors of two to six percentage points, depending on the amounts of copper and silver in the alloy. The findings reported by Mukherjee and Maity are incompatible. At first glance, it is clear that there is frequently a significant discrepancy and that both sets of results are probably unreliable.

The reason for this is two aspects of the methodology of measuring the SGs. Water was used as the immersion liquid, and this is unsuitable because of its relatively low density and high surface tension that can cause air bubbles to adhere to the coins. The second reason is the use of balances with insufficient accuracy. At the very minimum, all weights must be measured to +/- 1 mg, and it is preferable to measure to +/- 0.1 mg. The balance available in the BM at that time had an

²⁶ R.Bracey and W.A Oddy, *The analysis of Kushana period gold coins by Specific Gravity*, pp 1

²⁷ *Ibid*

²⁸ Tests by Duncan Hook and Maxime Callawaert at the British Museum are ongoing, a preliminary presentation was made to the Oriental Numismatic Society ONS members in April 2010 and full results will be published following the completion of the programme of work.

accuracy of ± 10 mg, and this was probably also true for the work of Maity and others in Calcutta.²⁹

Kushana gold coin analyses from more recent times have been conducted. SG measurements were performed on coins from the Bharat Kala Bhavan in Varanasi (Sharma, 1999), but they are most likely even less accurate than the previous measurements. Techniques for nuclear activation have also been used. With these methods, energetic particles are shot at the coin (or a sample). This results in the production of radioactive materials with distinct decay patterns.

These can then be measured to determine the concentration of a specific element present. Meyers (1969) used neutron activation to examine four Kanishka and five Vasudeva coins from a Dutch collection. The Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris has more recently used proton activation on coins (Sachs & Blet-Lamarquand, 2003; Blet-Lamarquand, 2006).

As a result, values for gold, copper, silver, and trace elements have been established. Unfortunately, there were no published images of the coins or enough information to locate images or identify the dies. The main advantage of such a study is that it could determine which metal combination was used to debase the gold. If that were known and found to be constant, then SG measurements could be used to accurately establish the gold content.³⁰

In addition there has been one other large-scale SG study of Kushana coins, carried out by Oddy for the unpublished conference on Kushana numismatics held at the British Museum in 1981 (Oddy, 1981). A summary of some of this data was

²⁹ Maity (1970) gives no details of the specific gravity methodology used by him or those whose results he reported. It is interesting that the tables of results in his book are not consistent in the number of significant figures given to the measurement of SG and the percentage of gold derived from the SG. It is not evident whether the number of significant figures represents the supposed accuracy of the data. In any case, even when weighing to ± 0.1 mg, it is not warranted to quote gold content to better than a single decimal place.

³⁰ The key point to remember is that SG is a physical property of a solid, in this case, a gold alloy. As copper and silver have different specific gravities, two coins can have the same gold content but significantly different SG values.

published by Oddy and Cribb in the MacDowall Festschrift (1998). That article which focuses on the debasement of post-Vasudeva Kushana coins presents only average gold content for the coins. As the study involved is particularly important both for the methods employed and also because of its place in Joe Cribb's work on late Kushana coins, it is the intention to publish all of the results here.³¹

Joe Cribb, who recently retired after long service at the British Museum, has invested a large amount of time on late Kushana coins with substantial results. The recognition that the late Kushana coins name kings, rather than tribes or governors, and the chronology of the post-Vasudeva rulers is almost entirely the result of his work. This is a huge step forward in interpretation from the typology presented by Göbl (1984). Cribb deserves much of the credit for advancing our understanding of late Kushana coinage in particular, and the coins and history of the Kushana period in general. He remains actively involved in work on Kushana coins and his colleagues will know that he has generously shared the results of unpublished research over many years. He has also given many presentations on Kushana coins containing much novel and interesting work on the dynasty. We all hope that he will find time to publish these efforts during his retirement.³²

Cribb has always approached numismatics with an eclectic mindset, using a range of techniques to decipher ancient coins. The variety of techniques used is demonstrated by contrasting his 1993 die study of the Heraus/Sanab coinage with his 2009 presidential addresses to the Royal Numismatic Society. They also demonstrate that, regardless of the approach, he has always used these tools to shed light on history through coins rather than engaging in numismatics for its own

³¹ And by publish is meant a downloadable spreadsheet and a zip file full of images on a website. While editors and readers might indulge in a lengthy list of results, practical experience has shown it serves very little purpose and large bodies of data are more useful to researchers in electronic formats.

³² R.Bracey and W.A Oddy, *The analysis of Kushana period gold coins by Specific Gravity*, pp 3

sake. Therefore, it shouldn't come as a surprise that Joe Cribb would be interested in scientific analysis in his quest to comprehend Kushana coinage.

Between 1980 and 1984, Andrew Oddy measured the SG of coins from the numismatic trade, private collections, and the British Museum. Oddy measured 161 Kushana coins from the British Museum altogether. The majority of these date from Vasudeva and later. In addition, he examined 267 coins provided by professional numismatists or private collectors, as well as 29 Sasanian, 19 Kushano-Sasanian, and 80 Kidarite coins housed in the British Museum. The coins in one private collection were subsequently donated to the Bern Historical Museum, Switzerland.³³ This group consisted mostly of Kushana coins, Kushanshah imitations and Kidarite coins.³⁴

METHOD:

These findings are significant not only because more than 500 coins were examined, but also due to the methodology used.

Michael Hughes and Andrew Oddy at the British Museum started to reevaluate the process of analyzing gold coins using specific gravity in the late 1960s. They made three changes to the standard method of weighing the coin in the air and then again when it is submerged in water. These improvements were aimed at increasing the accuracy of the measured SG (Hughes and Oddy, 1970; Oddy and Hughes, 1972).³⁵

- All weights were measured using an analytical balance with an accuracy of $\pm 0.0001\text{g}$.

³³ The collection of an American called Craig Alden Burns.

³⁴ R.Bracey and W.A Oddy, *The analysis of Kushana period gold coins by Specific Gravity*, pp 3

³⁵ *Ibid*

- Instead of using water as the immersion liquid, a heavy fluorocarbon, called perfluoro-1-methyl decalin was used. This is almost twice as dense as water.
- The temperature of the immersion liquid was measured each time a coin was analysed and a correction was applied to the SG calculation to allow for changes to the density of the immersion liquid with variations in room temperature.

The results of these improvements were that the maximum error in the measurement of SG was reduced to ± 0.06 . When 20 independent measurements were made on the same gold coin, the standard deviation was found to be as low as ± 0.02 .³⁶

However, it soon became clear that analyses of gold coins using various analytical methods did not always produce the same results, even though the careful experimental technique could now produce reliable specific gravities (Oddy, 1972; Schweizer, 1973).

Porosity (air bubbles) in the alloy and surface contamination of the coin by corrosion products, dirt, or grease from handling are two potential sources of measurement error for specific gravity. In a short period of time, experiments were able to demonstrate that struck coins do not have porosity issues and that any observable surface deposits could be removed by a conservator. Any remaining traces of other contaminants were then removed by acetone rinsing before measurement. This acetone rinse became a required component of the procedure.

But specific gravity analysis suffers from one unquantifiable source of error, the possible presence of copper, as well as silver, in the alloy of the coin.³⁷

³⁶ R.Bracey and W.A Oddy, *The analysis of Kushana period gold coins by Specific Gravity*, pp 4

³⁷ *Ibid*

Oddy and Blackshaw (1974) looked into this by creating a series of gold discs that resembled miniature coins and contained different ratios of copper and silver. Their specific gravities were precisely measured, and the data that have been made public show how challenging it can be to determine the amount of gold present in a sample when more than a trace amount of copper is likely to be present. Oddy and Blackshaw came to the conclusion that "it is not possible to quote absolute limits for the error of a gold analysis by the specific gravity method" after conducting an empirical study. However, it is reasonable to suppose that ... the actual gold content will lie somewhere between the value calculated ... assuming that only gold and silver are present in the alloy, and a value that is about 3% higher. For coins with a high gold content, the error will, on average, be less than this, while it may be greater for very debased pieces." This conclusion was reiterated by Oddy (1998) in the most recent, and easily available, publication of the SG method of analysing gold coins.³⁸

SHAPE & SIZE:

Kujala Kadphises (15 B.C.E. to 45 C.E.)

The earliest Indian Kushana coins are those which were issued by Kujala Kadphises in copper and Silver as follows:

1. Hermaues Type A:-

Weight:- Drachm- 260 Grains or 16.6 gm.

Half Drachm- 130 Grains,

Quarter- 65 Grains

³⁸ R.Bracey and W.A Oddy, *The analysis of Kushana period gold coins by Specific Gravity*, pp 4

2. Hermaues Type B:-

Weight:- Drachm- 260 Grains or 16.6 gm.

Half Drachm- 130 Grains,

Quarter- 65 Grain

3. Hermaues Type C:-

Weight:- Drachm- 260 Grains or 16.6 gm.

Half Drachm- 130 Grains,

Quarter- 65 Grain

4. Bull and Camel Type:-

Weight:- Drachm- 260 Grains or 16.6 gm.

Half Drachm- 130 Grains,

Quarter- 65 Grain

5. Diademed King and Zeus Type:-

Weight:- Drachm- 66 Grains or 4.2 gm.

Half Drachm- 33 Grains,

Quarter- 15 Grains

6. Sitting King and Zeus Type:-

Weight:- Drachm- 66 Grains or 4.2 gm.

Half Drachm- 33 Grains,

Quarter- 15 Grains

7. Helmeted King or Warrior Type:-

Weight:- Drachm- 66 Grains or 4.2 gm.

Half Drachm- 33 Grains,
Quarter- 15 Grains

Coins of Vima Kadphises:-

Vima's coins portray him as a successful and powerful man, in contrast to his father's crude coins. He continued the earlier tradition by issuing copper coins, but his greatest contribution was the debut of extensive gold coins in India. Most likely, he produced these coins in response to the abundance of Roman coins being traded in India. He issued three different gold coins: the quarter-Dinara, Dinara, and double-dinar. The final one is uncommon. The following table can be used to explain the coinage of Wima.

1. Enthroned King and Shiva Type:-

Weight:- Double Dinar- 248 Grain or 15.8 gm,
Dinar- 120-124 Grain,
Quarter Dinar- 30 Grain

2. Seated King and Shiva Type (A):-

Weight:- Double Dinar- 248 Grain or 15.8 gm,
Dinar- 120-124 Grain,
Quarter Dinar- 30 Grain

3. Seated King and Shiva Type (B):-

Weight:- Double Dinar- 248 Grain or 15.8 gm,
Dinar- 120-124 Grain,
Quarter Dinar- 30 Grains

4. Bust of King Type:-

Weight:- Double Dinar- 248 Grain or 15.8 gm,

Dinar- 120-124 Grain,

Quarter Dinar- 30 Grains

5. King in Picture Frame Type:-

Weight:- Double Dinar- 248 Grain or 15.8 gm,

Dinar- 120-124 Grain,

Quarter Dinar- 30 Grains

6. Enthroned King and Siva Type (A):-

Weight:- Double Dinar- 248 Grain or 15.8 gm,

Dinar- 120-124 Grain,

Quarter Dinar- 30 Grains

7. Enthroned King and Siva Type (A):-

Weight:- Double Dinar- 248 Grain or 15.8 gm,

Dinar- 120-124 Grain,

Quarter Dinar- 30 Grains

8. King in Chariot and Siva Type:-

Weight:- Double Dinar- 248 Grain or 15.8 gm,

Dinar- 120-124 Grain,

Quarter Dinar- 30 Grains

9. King at Fire-Altar Type:-

Weight:- Double Dinar- 248 Grain or 15.8 gm,

Dinar- 120-124 Grain,
Quarter Dinar- 30 Grains

10. King at Fire-Altar Type:-

Weight:- Pan- 260 Grain or 16.6 gm,
Half Pan- 130 Grain,
Quarter Pan- 65 Grains

Coins of Kanishka:-

Kanishka (Kanishka I), Wima Kadphes' successor, issued coins only in gold and copper like his predecessor, but he preferred only one type for his portrayal: "Standing king sacrificing at an altar" He is wearing a long tunic, Shalwar, mantle held by double clasps at the chest, and a low round cap. He is sacrificing at an altar and holding a spear in his left hand. However, he did not restrict the In addition to issuing coins bearing the legend *Besilios Basilion Kanishkou*, he put an end to the bilingual tradition of Greek and Kharoshthi.

On the reverse of his coins, he soon abandoned Greek and added a new tongue: mid-Iranian (Bactrian) or Khotanese-Saka. The legend *Shao nano Shao Kanenshki Koshano* will now appear on Kanishka coins. Several deities, both male and female, bearing Iranian names are depicted on the reverse of these coins. Kanishka added the image of Buddha with the legend *Baddo* or *Sakamano Boddo* and kept Siva from his forebear's coins under the name Oesho (Bhavesa or Havesa).

No double dinars were printed by Kanishka. For the first year's issues, only dinars are known, though gold quarter dinars were also printed later. Anemos, Helios, Hephaistos, Nana, and Salene were the reverse deities depicted in the first-year Greek issues that are known to exist. Compare the depictions of the Iranian solar

deity Mithra (Miir) and the Greek god Helios on the later, below-the-fold issue. They are identical, indicating that they were regarded as the same deity.

A. Greek Coins of Kanishka:

1. King and Helios Deity Type:-



Metal:- Gold

Shape:- Spherical

Weight: - Dinar- 120-124 Grain, Quarter- 30 Grains

Period:- 78-100 C.E.

2. King and Helios Deity Type (Copper):-



Metal:- Copper

Shape:- Spherical

Weight;- 140 grain Half unit

Period:- 78-100 C.E.

3. King and Nana Deity Type (Copper):-



Metal:- Copper

Shape:- Spherical

Weight:- 130 grain Half unit

Period:- 78-100 C.E.

B. Bactrian Coins of Kanishka:-

1. King and Ardochsho Deity Type:-



Metal:- Gold

Shape:- Spherical

Weight:- Dinar- 120-124 Grain, Quarter- 30 Grains

2. King and Athsho Type (Quarter):-



Metal:- Gold

Shape:- Spherical

Weight:- Quarter- 30 Grains

Bactrian issues: Bronze

1. King and Athsho Deity Type (tetradrachm):-



Metal:- Bronze

Shape:- Spherical

Weight: 17.26 gm. $\frac{1}{2}$ Unit, $\frac{1}{4}$ Unit

2. King and Sakyamuni Buddha Type (tetradrachm):-



Metal:- Bronze

Shape:- Spherical

Weight: 16.42 gm. $\frac{1}{2}$ Unit, $\frac{1}{4}$ Unit

3. King and Maitreya Buddha Type (tetradrachm):-



Metal:- Bronze

Shape:- Spherical

Weight: 16.28 gm. $\frac{1}{2}$ Unit, $\frac{1}{4}$ Unit

4. King and MAO Deity Type (tetradrachm):-



Metal:- Bronze

Shape:- Spherical

Weight: 16.40 gm. $\frac{1}{2}$ Unit, $\frac{1}{4}$ Unit

5. King and Mithra (Miir) Deity Type (tetradrachm):-



Metal:- Bronze

Shape:- Spherical

Weight: 16.60 gm, $\frac{1}{2}$ Unit, $\frac{1}{4}$ Unit

6. King and NANA, Deity Type (tetradrachm):-



Metal:- Bronze

Shape:- Spherical

Weight: 17.10 gm, $\frac{1}{2}$ Unit, $\frac{1}{4}$ Unit

7. King and Oado (Vado), Deity Type (tetradrachm):-



Metal:- Bronze

Shape:- Spherical

Weight: 16.75 gm $\frac{1}{2}$ Unit, $\frac{1}{4}$ Unit

8. King and Oesho (Shiva), Deity Type (tetradrachm):-



Metal:- Bronze

Shape:- Spherical

Weight: 17.15 gm, $\frac{1}{2}$ Unit, $\frac{1}{4}$ Unit

The only Kanishka coins that depict Oesho with only two arms are the low-denomination Eastern bronzes; all other coins depict him with four. Another intriguing and unique aspect of this coin is that it depicts Oesho with a noticeable erection, a feature that can also be found on some of Vima Kadphises's coins.

Chapter 4

Metrology and Coin Denomination

METROLOGY:

Even today, bi-metallic Kusha coins made of copper and gold are widely available. The Imperial Kushas' gold and copper coins were minted in a variety of unique denominations that combined to create a simple and comprehensible monetary system. Even though Vima Kadphises introduced many significant and novel features into the fully developed Kusha coinage, it appears that at least some of these features were borrowed from earlier patterns and models.

The influx of Roman gold through trade and commerce is related to and may have been a cause of Vima Kadphises' introduction of gold coinage in the vast and extensive territories of the Indian subcontinent under his rule. From the reigns of Augustine to Nero, trade between India and the Roman Empire was at its height. The huge demand for luxury goods from India among Roman aristocrats was a significant contributor to this great surge in Indo-Roman trade. Most likely, the development and decline of the Kusha gold coinage were caused by the start, peak, and end of the Indo-Roman trade.

Kushana gold coins had been introduced by Vima Kadphises. Roman denarius aureus or dinar were the names given to the coins of Vima. Given that the Roman gold aureus and the Kushana gold dinar are nearly identical in size and weight, it is possible that Vima Kadphises' introduction of the currency was inspired by the Roman gold coin. A dinar typically weighs 122.6 grains or 7.970 grammes. Roman aurei, on the other hand, weighs 122.9 grains. As a result, these can be connected

to one another. Other varieties of Kushana gold coins are either twice as heavy, weighing in at 246 grains, or only one-fourth as heavy, weighing in at about 30 grains. There have been discovered a number of Kushäas quarter dinars.

The fully developed Vima Kadphises denominational system did not remain untouched. Real values of the various denominations had decreased due to some degree of inflation, and gold coinage was becoming more and more debased. To keep up with the changes in the economy, copper denominations had gradually lost weight. Some of these modifications to coin weight standards can provide priceless proof of the chronological order of various issues.

The Kushana's gold coinage had nearly always been the same weight. However, there was a propensity for the amount of pure gold in Kushana coins to gradually decline. The rate of reduction is so slight that it is not possible to accept the theory advanced by some academics that two different Huvishka kings should be identified solely based on the weight of their respective gold coins (or copper coins). After Vasudeva I, the weight of Kushana gold coins had been nearly constant and very close to the imperial monetary standard. But as the metal's quality deteriorated further, there was a gradual decline in the standard.

The Kushana gold coinage and the Roman gold coinage differ significantly. The Kushna authorities overcame their economic problems by slightly debasing their coins while maintaining the weight standard, unlike the Romans who gradually decreased the weight standard. The Kushna dār did not precisely replicate the weight standard of the current Roman aureus. The Roman aureus and the Kushana dinār were never precisely equal.

Instead, the Kushanas' successors moved more quickly to reduce the amount of gold in their coins. Two significant factors in this direction may have been the scarcity of gold and its high cost.

Alexander Cunningham had previously demonstrated that the full denomination gold coins of Vima Kadphises, Kanishka, Huvishka, and Vasudeva I had an average weight of about 123 grains.

His results were:³⁹

(a) 19 *dinārs* of Vima Kadphises

average weight

of 122.21 grains

(b) 21 *dinārs* of Kanishka

average weight

of 122.10 grains

(c) 18 *dinārs* of Huvishka

average weight

of 122.16 grains

(d) 21 *dinārs* of Vasudeva I

average weight

123.03 grains

³⁹ Satya Shrava, *The Kushana Numismatics*, pp. 45

The small quarter dinars of these four kings weigh 30.8 grains, on average.⁴⁰

The double *dinārs* had weighed on average, on the lowest limit at 237.6 grains and at the highest limit at 246.1 grains.⁴¹

Gold coins of the Imperial Kushānas may be divided into three classes according to their average weight, as:⁴²

(a) Double *dinār*

246.4 grains.

(b) *dinār*

123.2 grains.

(c) Quarter *dinār*

30.8 grains.

Only a few quarter dinars of Vima Kadphises has, so far, been discovered. Quarter *dinārs* of the Kushānas in weight range from the lowest limit of 27 grains to the highest limit of 30.8 grains. However, most of the quarter *dinārs* weigh more than 30 grains.⁴³

Only a few double-*dinārs* were issued by Vima Kadphises. Their weight ranges between 237.6 grains to 246.1 grains.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Satya Shrivastava, *The Kushana Numismatics*, pp. 45

⁴¹ *Ibid*

⁴² *Ibid*

⁴³ *Ibid*

⁴⁴ *Ibid*

The weight of the dinars that Vima Kadphises issues range from 119.0 grains to 123.3 grains. *Dinārs* issued by Kanishka are either 109.2 grains (Boddo type) or 123.4 grains in weight. In the case of Huvishka, these dinars (Mahsena type) weigh between 119.3 and 125 grains. Huvishka issues dinārs that weigh between 122.3 and 124.7 grains. As a result, it appears that the minimum limit is 109.2 grains and the maximum limit is 125 grains. The median could be set at 123 grains.

A Kushana *dinar* typically weighed much less than an Attic standard, which weighed just over 130 grains on average. There is no precise correspondence between the weights of Roman aurei and Kushana *dinars*, according to an analysis of the two coinages. It appears that the relative worth of gold and silver at the time the Kushana *dinars* were in use set their standard.

Roman and Kushana coins appear to have been traded primarily in large-scale international trade transactions, but they may not have ever circulated side by side in the same or nearby territories.

COIN-DENOMINATIONS:

- a. *Dinar*⁴⁵: The use of the Roman word 'Dinerius' in its form dinar in early Indian inscriptions is well known. In the Rājatarāngiṇī while referring to Tormāna, Brihaspati and Katyayana in their Smritis refer to a dinār or a suvarṇa. The Gupta gold coins have been referred to as dinārs in inscriptions. Therefore, later Kushāṇa coins which were precursors of Gupta coins were known by the name dinar.

⁴⁵ Satya Shrava, *The Kushana Numismatics*, pp. 46

- b. ***Kushana***⁴⁶: The word Kushana has also been used as a coin denomination. In the Nasik inscription of Ushavadāta, son-in-law of Kshatrapa Nahapāna, an investment is traded as providing for some resident monks with Kusaṇa-mūla. Here, it refers to the gold coins of Kushana emperors.
- c. ***Suvarna***⁴⁷: Suvarna, a famous term for gold coins, was known long before the advent of the Kushāṇas in India.
- d. ***Nānaka***⁴⁸: *Yajñavalkya Smṛiti* refers to nanaka also, as a coin- denomination. A commentator on this smṛiti writes that Nanaka denotes a coin with *Nānā* as their cognisance (*Nanak tanka*). Kushāna coins up to the reign of Vasudeva I had Nana invariably as one of their deities.
- e. ***Kedara***⁴⁹: Jayaditya, author of *Kāśikā* refers to the word kedara. Could the *kedara* of *Kāśika* be the same as *Kidāra* of the little Yueh-chih or *Kidāra* of *Kidāra Kushāṇa* coins? Perhaps *Kidāra* is a coin denomination named after the *Kidāra* dynasty.

WEIGHT STANDARD OF COPPER COINS:

Since silver coinage had recently undergone significant debasement before the Kushas, copper coinage gradually replaced silver coinage. The Kushana kings produced an enormous quantity of copper coins in a range of weights. From their

⁴⁶ Satya Shrivastava, *The Kushana Numismatics*, pp. 46

⁴⁷ *Ibid*

⁴⁸ *Ibid*

⁴⁹ *Ibid*

study, Kushana copper coins may be divided into three categories on the basis of their average weight.⁵⁰

- (a) Coins weighing 260 grains = one *pana* of 28 *māshās*;
- (b) Coins weighing 130 grains = 1/2 *pana* of 14 *māshās*; and
- (c) Coins weighing 65 grains = 1/4 *pana* of 7 *māshās*.

The unit of a copper coin in ancient India was called a *pana* and according to *Manusmriti*, its weight like a *suvarna* or a gold coin was 144 grains or *māshās* or *rattis*. The normal weight of a *pana* was only 80 *rattis*. But sometimes, the weight of a *pana* might have even been more up to 100 *rattis* or 16 *māshās*. Several coins struck by the Kushānas weigh from 240 to 260 grains i.e. about 26 to 28 *māshās*. The *Agni Purana* refers to a *pana* of 24 *māshas*. Variations in weight in each division of copper coins are generally explained as due to carelessness on the part of the mint authority.⁵¹

The large copper coins introduced by Vima Kadphises, along with their subdivisions, created a uniform copper coinage throughout the Kushana kingdom. The Kushana copper denominations' weight standard has some similarities to some of the earlier coinage from northwest India and Bactria. The three different sizes of these copper coins were primarily large ones weighing about 17 grammes, medium ones weighing about 8 grammes, and small ones weighing about 4 grammes.

Huvishka's large copper coins are surprisingly diverse, but they can be divided into three different categories.

⁵⁰ Satya Shrivastava, *The Kushana Numismatics*, pp. 47

⁵¹ *Ibid*

The three sizes of copper coins used in Vima are referred to as large, middle, and small. The weight of copper tetradrachms decreased slightly between the reigns of Vima and Vasudeva I. Kanishka added a hemi-drachm to the series of copper coinage while slightly reducing the weight of a copper tetradrachm. In his early issues, Huvishka struck copper tetradrachms that weighed 15 to 16 grammes, following the weight standard of Kanishka's coins. Vasudeva I's copper coins were minted to an even lower standard of 9 to 10 grammes. Huvishka and Vāsudeva I had not bothered to strike copper hemi-drachms.

The weight of the better-preserved coins of Vasudeva I mostly falls between 7 and 10 grammes. The weight standard of Vima Kadphises was retained.⁵²

The Kushanas deserve praise for adjusting the weight of their copper coins to the shifting gold-to-copper ratio. Perhaps the gold standard, in use since the time of Vima Kadphises, determined their value. As part of the Imperial Kushanas' monetary policy to address some of their economic issues, the intrinsic value of gold in their coinage was gradually reduced, and the weight of their tetradrachms was gradually reduced.

⁵² Satya Shrava, *The Kushana Numismatics*, pp. 48

Chapter 5

Obverse and Reverse Devices

By taking advantage of a split in the Pahalava (Parthian) and Scytho-Parthian dynasties, Kujula Kadphises (30-80 AD) founded the Kushana dynasty in 78 AD and gradually took over the prosperous southern region of ancient India, known historically as Gandhara (modern-day Pakistan). His grandson Vima Kadphises (Yen-kao-Chen in Chinese records) was responsible for elevating Kushana to the status of a major force in northern India. With his conquest of northwest India (modern Punjab, now divided between Pakistan and India), the Kushana empire came into existence during his reign. The Kushana empire included northern India and the northwest of India, which includes Pakistan and contemporary Afghanistan. There are numerous examples of trade with China, Central Asia, Egypt, and Rome, which strengthened their economy and made their kingdom wealthy and prosperous. Soon after, he was influenced by 'early' Hinduism, and he used the chance to declare himself Mahishwara, another name for Lord Shiva, on his coins. Shiva is a well-known Hindu deity who is frequently represented in human form as a one- or three-headed being (though he is actually thought to be four or even five-headed, with three heads visible), with or without the bull Nandi, his steed. In the votive panel, which is visible on the left, he is holding a trident and has a third eye on his forehead.

Gold and copper coins were first introduced by Kushana kings, and many of them have persisted up to this day. India's first gold coins were introduced by the Kushana emperor Vima Kadaphises. The Double Dinar can be regarded as the Indian subcontinent's first gold coin. The bearded, diademed King is depicted on

the reverse of the coin, sitting on a high couch (throne) with his feet resting on a footstool and holding a twig or branch of a spice plant in his right hand, with a club in the foreground to his right. He is sitting on a footstool. The Greek (not Bactrian) legend *Basileus Ooema Kadaphises* starts at the 'I' position. In the upper right field, there is a Kushana emblem. Shiva is depicted on the reverse holding a trident in his right hand while standing next to the bull Nandi. The *Kharoshti* legends `Maharajasa rajadirajasa sarvalogaishwarasa Mahiishwarasa Vima Kadaphisasa Tratara. The legend on the reverse can be translated as *Emperor, the King of Kings, follower (?) of great god (god of all) Shiva, Vima Kadaphisa, the saviour*. On the left, there is the Nandipada symbol.

On the reverse of his coins, Vima primarily depicted Shiva (Oesho in Bactrian), standing (with a trident) with (or without) his bull Nandi. This was THE BEST numismatic icon ever produced in Indian history. The idea of placing the King on the obverse and a god or goddess from the Hindu pantheon (and occasionally from the Buddhist, Greek, and Zoroastrian pantheons) became so well-liked that it was applied to nearly all gold coins in India for more than six centuries. Later, it was used up until the 11th century AD in a modified form.

Vima Kadphises⁵³:

110-128 AD



Gold Double Dinar, Weight: 15.75 gms, Possibly the FIRST GOLD COIN of India

Obverse: Bearded, diademed King, seated on the high couch (throne) with feet resting on a foot-stool, holding in his right hand a twig or branch of spice plant, a club in the foreground to his right. His feet resting on the footstool. The Greek (not Bactrian) legend 'Basileus Ooema Kadaphises?' starting at the 'I' position. The Kushana symbol is in the upper right field.

Reverse: Naked Shiva standing, holding a trident in his right hand, standing with Nandi, the bull. The Kharoshti legends *Maharajasa rajadirajasa sarvalogaishwarasa Mahiishwarasa Vima Kadaphisasa Tratara* starting at XII position is around. The Nandipada symbol is on the left.

Reference: GK#11

⁵³ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

The statue unearthed near Mathura, now housed in Mathura museum shows a Kushana inscription indicative of Vima's name (*Maharaja rajatiraja devaputra Kushanaputra (Shahi Vamataksha) masya Vakanapatina Huma (devakulu) karita Arama pushkarini udapana (cha) sa-da (kothako)*).

Here, Vima is depicted seated on a throne, which appears to be a replica of the double dinar, as seen above.

Two more Vima double dinars are displayed below. They are preserved in nearly mint condition.

Without a doubt, every Kushana emperor used their coinage to advertise their own superiority and superhuman abilities! In India, the idea of depicting a king or ruler on coins was nonexistent, so all previous dynasties produced coins with only symbols depicted (punch-marked coins). This concept was popularized by the Kushana rulers (borrowed and later modified from Indo-greek coins), and it was used for another 2000 years. In addition to later Indian dynasties like the Guptas, neighbouring kings like the Sassanians (of Persia) also copied Kushana coinage.

Vima Kadphises⁵⁴:

110-128 AD



Di-stater, Bilingual (**Double Dinara/King on the cloud, right**)

Weight: 16.01 gm, Gold

Obverse: Bust of king right on the cloud, holding a mace in right hand, far shoulder flaming, *tamgha* in left field. The Greek (not Bactrian) legend '*Basileus Ooema Kadaphises*' starts at the 'I' position.

Reverse: Shiva standing facing, head left, holding a trident in right hand, bull standing right behind him, *nandipada* in left field. The Kharoshti legends '*Maharajasa rajadirajasa sarvalogaishwarasa Mahiishwarasa Vima Kadaphisasa Tratarā*' starting at XII position is around. The Nandipada symbol is on the left.

Reference: Mint A, emission 3. Gobl 12 (the same obverse die).

⁵⁴ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

Vima Kadphises⁵⁵:

110-128 AD



Di-stater, Bilingual (**Double Dinara/King on the cloud, left**)

Weight: 15.93 gm

Gold

Obverse: Bust of king left on a cloud, holding raised mace in right hand and sword hilt in left, far shoulder flaming, *tamgha* in right field. The Greek (not Bactrian) legend '*Basileus Ooema Kadaphises*' starts at the 'I' position.

Reverse: Shiva standing facing, head left, holding a trident in right hand, bull standing right behind him, *nandipada* in left field. The Kharoshti legends '*Maharajasa rajadirajasa sarvalogaishwarasa Mahiishwarasa Vima Kadaphisasa Tratarasa*' starting at XII position is around. The Nandipada symbol is on the left.

Reference: Mint A, emission 3. Gobl 13.

⁵⁵ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

Three different gold coin sizes were produced by Vima: the Double Stater/Dinar (16 gm), the Dinar (8 gm), and the Quarter Dinar (2 gm). Double dinars are displayed above, followed by dinars and quarter dinars.

Vima Kadphises⁵⁶:

110-128 AD



Stater, Bilingual (**LORD SHIVA/left TYPE**)

Weight: 7.88 gm, Gold

Obverse: Bust of King, emerging of clouds, looking **left**

Reverse: Naked Shiva standing, holding a trident and lion skin, *Kharoshti* legends

Reference: Gobl#19

Additionally, Vima produced copper coins in three different weights: drachm (4.2 g), didrachm (8.5 g), and tetradrachm (17 g). The image of Vima making an altar

⁵⁶ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

sacrifice is a fine example of his Tetradrachm. Shiva and Nandi can be seen in reverse.

Vima produced bilingual coins, just like later Indo-Greek kings. The legends on the obverse of this coin were written in cursive Greek (Bactrian), and the legends on the reverse were written in Sanskrit using an ancient Indian script called Kharoshti. On the reverse, the Kharoshti legends read *Maharajasa Rajadhirajasa Sarvaloka Ishwarasa Mahishwarasa, Vimma Kadaphisasha Tratara*. The legend on the reverse can be translated as *Emperor, the King of Kings, follower (?) of great god (god of all) Shiva, Vima Kadaphisa, the saviour*.

Vima Kadphises⁵⁷:

110-128 AD



Quarter Stater, Bilingual (King looking through the window)

Weight: 1.95 gm, Gold

Obverse: Bust of King looking through the window, a clear legend in Bactrian
BACILEV(C OOHMO) KADFICHC

⁵⁷ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

Reverse: Trident, phallus and drum, Kushana symbol and Nanadipada in the left and right field respectively, clear Kharoshti legends

Reference: Gobl# 9.9

The Indo-Greeks, who were deposed by Kushan, undoubtedly had an impact on Vima's coins. Later Indo-Greeks produced bilingual coins (possibly for the first time in Indian history), which explains why Vima's coin is bilingual. However, it's interesting to note that Lord Shiva, a well-known Hindu god, was the most prominent deity on Vima's coin—not a god from the Greek pantheon. This makes the coins of Vima and other Kushana emperors particularly unique in Indian numismatics.

The Kushana monetary system, which used 8 grams of gold and 16 grams of copper, was created by Vima. His weight standards continued to be used in India for almost four centuries under the Gupta emperors. All of the early Kushana kings produced beautiful gold and copper coins with various deities honouring them. In the early Kushana period (up until Vasudeva I), Shiva, with or without his chariot, Nandi, was the most important deity. Laxmi or Lakshmi, the goddess of luck and wealth, appeared on the reverse of later Kushana gold coins, which were issued by the kings who succeeded Vasudeva I as the Kushana emperor. Few Kanishka and Huvishaka coins featured Laxmi as the goddess Ardoxo, but later Kushans abandoned the Shiva and Nandi, which had been the most prevalent symbol of the Kushana dynasty and minted nearly all of their gold coinage with Laxmi on it instead.

It's an extremely fascinating aspect of Kushana history that the deity changed their coins during this time of transition. Samudragupta, the Gupta emperor, was the first to pay attention seriously to his forebears' coinage. Samudragupta undoubtedly carefully examined the Kushana coins that were on hand. He created the first Gupta dynasty gold coins, which were nearly identical to later Kushana coins.

Greek and Roman coinage from the first century is very similar to the Kushana gold weight standard of 8 gms. The Kushana empire received a significant amount of Roman gold coins from trade with Rome, which were melted down and used in Kushana mints to make coins. The fact that Northern India lacked many gold-producing mines suggests that the Roman gold, which poured into India in large quantities as a result of trade, was the main source of Kushana gold. Due to the widespread availability and/or debasement of earlier punch-marked coins, silver coins were not produced frequently.

In 128 AD, Vima's capable son Kanishka took over as ruler of this dynasty. According to the majority of historians, Kanishka was the Kushana dynasty's greatest ruler and is known as the legendary king of ancient India. The first ancient king to ever depict shoulder flames and a nimbus around the royal head on coins—giving himself the status of a deity—was him. He and his progeny, who ruled *Aryavarta*, India, referred to themselves as "Devputra," which means son of god.

In 1993, a rock carving of Kanishka was discovered in Afghanistan's Rabatak region, close to Surkh Kotal. It gives information about him as a ruler, his ancestry, and the size of his empire. The Rabatak inscription is written in Greek script in Bactrian (also known as the Aryan language, as claimed by Kanishka to distinguish it from Ionian or Greek). One of the most important discoveries made in the Kushana realm gave an accurate date for Kanishka's reign as well as a list of the major cities that he ruled over. The four cities Saketa, Kausambi, Pataliputra, and Champa are among those mentioned. This demonstrates unequivocally that his vast empire included Bactria (modern Afghanistan), part of central Asia (Tajikistan), northwest India (modern Pakistan), and northern India up until Pataliputra or Patana (modern Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar states). This inscription also denotes the replacement of Yavana (Ionian or Greek)

speech with Aryan speech at that time in his kingdom! Additionally, he claimed that a number of gods, including Nana, Omma (Uma), Ahura Mazda, Komaro (Kumara), Maaseno (Mahasena, another name for Skanda/Kumara), Bizago (Visakha, another name for Skanda/Kumara), and Miro (Mihara), had blessed his rule.

An image of a Kanishka sculpture from the Mathura Museum is displayed on the left. This headless statue, which bears his name, is comparable to his father's statue in the same museum. Significantly, the sculpture bears a striking resemblance to the images of him on the coins that are depicted below.

During his and his son's rule, the Kushana empire reached the height of its territorial extent. Kashmir was a part of Kalhan's empire, according to the poet and historian from Kashmir who wrote the renowned "Rajatarangini" chronicle of Kashmir's kings. In Kashmir, he also constructed the Kushka city, which bears his name.

Kanishka I (the great)⁵⁸:

128-154 AD



⁵⁸ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

Dinar, Weight: 7.9 gm, Gold

Obverse: King looking left, Sacrificing at Altar with his right hand, left hand holding bow. Legends are in Bactrian. Flames emerging from shoulder.

Reverse: Four armed Lord Shiva (OHPO) standing to the left, a symbol in left field. Shiva holds the Damru (Drum), Kamandalu (Vase) and Ankusha (elephant goad) in his right hand, the trident in his upper left hand. In the lower left hand, he holds the Mriga, an Indian antelope by horns.

Kanishka I (the great)⁵⁹:

128-154 AD



Dinar (Nana)

Weight: 7.93 gm, Gold

Obverse: King looking left, Sacrificing at Altar with his right hand, left hand holding bow. Legends are in Bactrian. Flames emerging from shoulder.

⁵⁹ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

Reverse: Nana standing to the right, holding a sceptre; *tamgha* is to the right.

Reference: Gobl#35

Kanishka was not only a great warrior but also a man of excellent taste and learning. He was patronizing modern intellectuals, including the Buddhist teacher Shakya-muni. A large group of modern academics and philosophers were gathered by Kanishka to study the Buddhist scriptures and create commentaries on them. In his court was renowned philosopher, poet, and playwright Ashvaghosh, author of the Buddha Charita. He erected a number of monuments, the most famous of which is the enormous Chaitya (Shah-ji-ki-dheri stupa) in his capital Purushpur (Peshawar, which is close to the capital of contemporary Pakistan), which has been praised by many visitors since the late period. Chinese travellers Fa Hsien and Hsuan Tsang detailed the construction of Kanishka's temples in Taxila and Gandhara (modern Pakistan) in their writings. On the right, you can see the coffin or reliquary that was discovered inside Kanishka's enormous stupa. The image of the Buddha being worshipped by Brahma and Indra is depicted on the casket's lid as he sits on a lotus pedestal. Following the excavation, the British sent three Buddha bone fragments to Myanmar/Burma, where they were found.

Gold and copper were the two metals used in Kanishka's coinage. Dinar (or stater) and quarter Dinar gold coins were both produced in two different sizes. Rare quarter dinar coins are regarded as one of the finest works of miniature art. The following are two examples of rarities:

Kanishka I (the great)⁶⁰:

128-154 AD



Quarter Dinar (**Nanashao**)

Weight: 1.99 gm, Gold

Obverse: King standing left, right shoulder flaming, cloak flying, sacrificing over altar and holding goad in right hand and spear in left. Legends are in Bactrian.

Reverse: Nanashao, nimbed, standing right, holding a sceptre in right hand and box in the left, tamgha in right field.

Reference: Gobl#50

⁶⁰ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

Kanishka I (the great)⁶¹:

128-154 AD



Quarter Dinar (**Athsho**)

Weight: 2.01 gm, Gold

Obverse: King standing left, right shoulder flaming, cloak flying, sacrificing over altar and holding goad in right hand and spear in left. Legends are in Bactrian.

Reverse: Athsho, god of fire, standing left, holding wreath in extended right hand, tamgha below in the left field.

Reference: Gobl#47

⁶¹ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

Kanishka, I was succeeded by Huvishka. A record of his reign has been discovered close to Kabul at Wardak. At Mathura, Huvishka erected numerous magnificent monuments. He founded the Hushka city in Kashmir, which bears his name (Kalhan describes Hushka in Rajatarangini). During the rule of Kanishka and Huvishka, the Kushana empire reached its pinnacle. Huvishka adopted several monikers, such as "Devaputra" (son of god), and is thought to have supported the Mathura School of Art. The Mathura Museum still has dozens of breathtaking examples of this school of art on display.

One exceptional Huvishka gold stater/Dinar is displayed below. Its obverse depicts him emerging from clouds, emphasizing his divine status (just like Vima and Kanishka). He is dressed in a loose-fitting tunic, a round helmet embellished with antlers and a crest ornament, and a jewelled yoke. In his right hand, he is holding an Ankusha (elephant goad or a royal sceptre), and in his left, a decorative mace. From the right shoulder, flames appear. King has a sideburn known as a *galamucha*. The Bactrian legend refers to Huvishka Kushana as the "King of Kings," Shaonano Shao Ooeshki Koshano. The Nandipada symbol is in the left field, and on the reverse is a standing image of the four-armed Lord Shiva (OHPO in Bactrian). Shiva has the trident in his upper left hand and the drum, vase, and vase in his right hand. He is holding the Mriga (his hunt), an Indian antelope, by its horns in his lower left hand.

Huvishka was most likely a sophisticated monarch, as evidenced by the abundance of cosmopolitan outlooks in his coinage. His earliest coins show him as a warrior with a beard and a weapon in hand (as seen below). However, the change is evident; his later coins depict him as a dashing king holding an elephant goad or mace while wearing an imperial crown and a jewelled tunic. This transition from a warrior who lived a nomadic lifestyle (below) to a king used to a lavish court life

(a sample of this type is shown on the right) is unique in Indian numismatic history. Huvishka produced the widest variety of coins, indicating that he was a prosperous and peaceful reign. Huvishka did not produce coins featuring Buddha, despite being a patron of Hinayana Buddhism (record kept in Mathura museum on a pedestal of Bodhisattva sculpture).

Huvishka⁶²:

154-192 AD



Dinar/Stater, Weight: 8.00 gm, Gold

Obverse: Half-length profile Bust of King to left, emerging from clouds, wearing rounded helmet decorated with antlers and crest ornament, jewelled yoke and loose fitting tunic. He holds an ornamental mace in his left hand and *Ankusha* (elephant goad or royal sceptre) in his right. Flames emerge from the right shoulder. King is sporting *Galamucha* (sideburn). This is an earlier type of portrait on the coin. The Bactrian legend '*Shaonano Shao Ooeshki Koshano*' starts at VII position.

⁶² <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

Reverse: Four armed Lord Shiva (OHPO) standing to the left, a symbol in left field. Shiva holds the Damru (Drum), Kamandalu (Vase) and Ankusha (elephant goad) in his right hand, the trident in his upper left hand. In the lower left hand, he holds the Mriga, an Indian antelope by horns.

Reference: Gobl#155.1

Huvishka⁶³:

154-192 AD



Dinar (**Elephant Rider**), Weight: 7.83 gm, Gold

Obverse: Huvishka riding elephant right The Bactrian legend '*Shaonano Shao Oeshki Koshano*' the King of Kings, Huvishka **Reverse:** "Ardoksho", nimbate goddess standing right, holding cornucopia, *tamgha* in right field

Reference: Gobl#305A

⁶³ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

Huvishka used gods from all three of the ancient religions—Greek, Zoroastrian, and Hinduism—and produced a wide variety of gold and copper coins. Only Hindu deities, primarily Lord Shiva, appear on Vima's coinage. Similar to how the majority of Kanishka's coinage featured Shiva, he also added deities from the Buddhist and Greek pantheon. Huvishka, however, used a significant number of gods from the Zoroastrian and Greek pantheon, in contrast to his forebears (and successors), indicating that Bactria was still a significant part of his empire. An incredibly rare coin featuring Huvishka riding an elephant and Three-Headed Shiva is displayed below.

Huvishka⁶⁴:

154-192 AD



Copper Unit, Weight: 9.72 gm

⁶⁴ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

Obverse: King riding an elephant to the right. He holds an *Ankusha* (elephant goad or royal sceptre) in his hand. The Bactrian legend '*Shaonano Shao Ooeshki Koshano*' starts at VII position.

Reverse: Three-headed, two-armed Lord Shiva (OHPO) standing facing, trident and symbol in left field. Shiva holds in the lower left hand, the *Mriga*, an Indian antelope by horns.

Huvishka is the minter of some of the most fascinating numismatic artefacts with significant historical significance. One such Huvishka coin (which is uncommon and highly sought-after) depicts Skanda-Kumara and Vishakha, two gods. Skanda is the son of Lord Shiva and is also referred to as Kumara, Kumarswamy, or Kartikeya. He is also known by the name Mahasena because he is thought to be the god of war. Another son of Shiva, Vishakha, was later combined with Shiva. Skanda was another son of Shiva. Perhaps the earliest known representation of this well-liked god exists on this Skanda-Kumara coin. Obverse: Ankusha (elephant goad or royal sceptre), depicting a king emerging from the clouds. On Reverse, on the left, **Skanda-Kumara** (*CKANDO KOMARO*) holds a globe-tipped staff in his left hand, while on the right is **Vishakha** (*BIZAGO*), who holds a trident. Both have swords hanging from their waists and are diademed. In Bactrian, the names are written.

These two coins are very unique because they may be the earliest examples of the well-known god Kartikeya (also known as Kumarswami, particularly in south India), who is very popular.

Huvishka⁶⁵:

154-192 AD



Dinar, Weight: 7.9 gm, Gold

Obverse: Half-length profile Bust of King to left, emerging from clouds, wearing rounded helmet decorated with antlers and crest ornament, jewelled yoke and loose fitting tunic. He holds an ornamental mace in his left hand and *Ankusha* (elephant goad or royal sceptre) in his right. Flames emerge from the right shoulder. King is sporting *Galamucha* (sideburn). This is an earlier type of portrait on the coin. The Bactrian legend reads '*Shaonano Shao Ooeshki Koshano*' starting at VII position.

Reverse: Two male gods standing on a plinth decorated with a sincere design their hands turned towards each other. The figure on the left, **Skanda-Kumara** (*CKANDO KOMARO*) holds a globe-tipped staff in his left hand while the figure on the right **Vishakha** (*BIZAGO*), holds a trident. Both are diademed, wear the *Dhoti* and have swords suspended from their waists. The names are written in Bactrian.

⁶⁵ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

Reference: Gobl#156.1 (same dies)

Another intriguing rarity produced by Huvishka was the Mahasena, which depicted a different variation of Skanda/Kumara/Kartikeya. The magnificent example of this gold coin, whose obverse depicts a king emerging from clouds, is displayed above. The reverse depicts the standing, facing nimbate figure of Mahasena (MAACHNO, MAASENO in Bactrian), an avatar of the war god Lord Kartikeya. His left hand is resting on his hip, and his right hand is holding a staff with a ribboned eagle top. He is wearing a sword around his waist.

Additionally, Huvishka produced copper coins, one of which is displayed above. On the coin's obverse, a king is shown riding an elephant, and on the reverse, Shiva has three heads. Mao, the moon goddess, in reverse, is another example. Throughout and after his reign, this copper coin was widely imitated by the various neighbouring regions due to its immense popularity.

Huvishka⁶⁶:

154-192 AD



Dinar, Weight: 7.83 gm, Gold

Obverse: Half-length profile Bust of King to left, emerging from clouds, wearing rounded helmet decorated with antlers and crest ornament, jewelled yoke and loose fitting tunic. He holds an ornamental mace in his left hand and Ankusha (elephant goad or royal sceptre) in his right. Flames emerge from the right shoulder. King is sporting Galamucha (sideburn). This is an earlier type of portrait on the coin. The Bactrian legend Shaonano Shao Ooeshki Koshano' starts at VII position.

Reverse: The nimble figure of Mahasena (MAACHNO, MAASENO in Bactrian) is standing, facing. He is holding an eagle-topped ribbed staff in his right hand and his left hand is resting on his hip. He has a sword suspended from the waist.

Reference: Gobl#298.2

⁶⁶ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

Vasudeva I oversaw this dynasty after Huvishka's rule. At a time when the Kushana empire was at its height of splendour, prosperity, and opulence, Vasudeva I was the last great ruler of the Kushana dynasty. He most likely had Mathura (in northern India) as his capital. He, too, supported the arts, and the Mathura School of Art flourished under his support. The Kushana dynasty had fully assimilated into Indian culture by the time of Vasudeva I, as evidenced by the coins he and his successors produced. All of the coins were struck with images of Laxmi (Ardoxsho) or Shiva (Oesho). The Kushana emperors never again used a god from the Greek or Zoroastrian pantheon on their coinage. In fact, Buddhism's influence diminished as well, reflecting the general population's preference for Hinduism.

The reverse of the majority of Vasudeva's coins featured the god Shiva (as Oesho), frequently holding a trident, Damru, a small Drum, and his bull, Nandi. A series of gold coins that were minted and featured a four-armed, three-headed Lord Shiva are an intriguing feature of his coinage. The exquisite skills of Kushana period die-engravers are amply displayed by the minute details of physical appearance depicted on these gold coins while portraying Lord Shiva (and his side heads) and his bull. An outstanding example of his coin, which is in mint condition, is displayed below. The king is depicted on the reverse, offering sacrifices at a small altar while wearing a helmet and all of his regalia. The complete and very readable legends on this coin are in Bactrian/Kharosthi.

Vasudeva I⁶⁷:

192-228 AD



Dinar, Weight: 8.05 gm, Gold

Obverse: King Sacrificing at Altar with the right hand, the left hand holding the trident. Another trident in the field. The Bactrian legend is around.

Reverse: Four-armed, *Three-headed Shiva*, side heads are human, standing with Nandi, looking **right**.

Reference: Gobl#506.3

⁶⁷ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

Vasudeva I⁶⁸:

192-228 AD



Dinar, Weight: 8 gm , Gold

Obverse: King Sacrificing at Altar with right hand, the left hand holding the trident.

Reverse: Four-Armed, *Three-headed Shiva*, side heads are NOT human, human and Bull type, standing with Nandi

Reference: Unpublished, NOT in Gobl, Similar to Gobl#500

⁶⁸ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

Vasudeva I (Possibly Vasudeva II)⁶⁹:

192-228 AD



Dinar, Weight: 7.88 gm, Gold

Obverse: Vasudeva, diademed and crowned, standing facing, head left, flames at shoulder, sacrificing over altar and holding trident; filleted trident to left

Reverse: Four-armed, *Three-headed Shiva*, **side heads are human**, standing with Nandi, facing. OhPO, ithyphallic Siva standing facing, holding diadem in extended right hand, trident in left; behind, the bull Nandi standing right; tamgha to left.

Reference: Gobl#525 (O1/R1); Donum Burns 433. Mint I (A). 1st emission.

⁶⁹ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

Vasudeva I⁷⁰:

192-228 AD



Dinar

Weight: 7.90 gm

Gold

Obverse: Vasudeva, nimbate, standing facing, head left, sacrificing over altar and holding trident; flame at shoulder

Reverse: OPhO (*sic*), ithyphallic **Shiva with three heads** standing facing, holding a garland or diadem in upraised right hand and trident in left; behind, the bull Nandi standing left; tamgha to the upper left.

Mint II (B). PαO(retrograde h)α(retrograde h)OPαO [Bα]ZOahO VOṖahO

Reference: Gobl#512 (unlisted dies); Donum Burns 424

⁷⁰ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

The three-headed Lord Shiva that is represented by coins is very unique; interestingly, the icon itself is well-represented as "Trimurti" in modern art. On Kushan-era votive panels, one of the best examples is displayed above.

One of the earliest gods whose worship in ancient India has been conclusively demonstrated is Lord Shiva, also known as Pashupati. He is a complex (and paradoxical) god that has been portrayed in a variety of abstract (Shivlinga) and anthropomorphic forms. These representations frequently feature the god with a vertical or horizontal third eye, snakes crossing his neck, tiger skin covering his chest, and an erect phallus or penis. In essence, the three heads stand for Shiva's three distinct facets: creation, protection, and destruction.

The right face frequently depicts him as a kind male, occasionally even as a smiling female, a representation of Uma/Parvati, which stands for both Shiva's feminine and creative sides. This face is frequently used as a symbol for the creator, Brahma. The frightening Aghora or Bhairava form of Lord Shiva, also known as Rudra-Shiva, the Destroyer, is represented by the young man with a moustache on his left face. On his forehead is the third eye, his main tool of annihilation. The preserver, Lord Vishnu, is represented by the serene (almost meditating) form in the middle of the face.

The three forms of Shiva are beautifully depicted in an early sculpture of Shiva (known as Sadashiva) that was discovered in the Salt Range of contemporary Pakistan and was carved between the fourth and seventh centuries. Shiva is oddly depicted as ithyphallic (with an erect penis), which is a common occurrence on Kushana coins.

At the Elephanta or Gharapuri Caves, one can see another well-known representation of the three-headed Shiva. In the sixth century, this 20-foot-tall colossus (shown below, centre) was hewn from a single rock. The three Kushana kings Huvishka, Vasudeva I, and Kanishka II also minted three-headed Shiva coins that symbolically represent both the primary Hindu deities, Shiva and Vishnu, in a single form, also known as Harihara. It appears that the image of Shiva holding various objects, such as the wheel, club, and lotus, which are typically associated with Vishnu, was introduced during the reigns of these three kings.

Vasudeva I⁷¹:

192-228 AD



Dinar

Weight: 8.0 gm

Gold

Obverse: King Sacrificing at Altar

⁷¹ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

Reverse: *Three-headed Shiva*, side heads are NOT human, boar and Lion type
Shiva standing with his Nandi, holding a trident.

Reference: Gobl#512.3

It's interesting to note that Vasudeva produced Kushana coins with boar and lion side heads (see above). Unsurprisingly, this representation can be found in modern sculptures. The magnificent white marble statue of Lord Vishnu on the right was sculpted during the 4th to 7th centuries CE rule of the Hindu Shahi (Shahiya) Dynasties. These Kushan's successors ruled over contemporary Pakistan and Afghanistan. He is holding a chakra and a conch shell, and two of his avatars, a lion (Narashimha) and a boar (Varaha) are standing on either side of his head.

In the seventh-century Vishnudharmottarapurana, the complex form of Vishnu, first known as Vaikuntha, is depicted on the far right. It is four-faced (*chaturmurti*), with the heads of a lion (right) and a boar (left) flanking a human head. In this form, he is also known by the epithet Para-Vasudeva, which means "the highest god." The fourth face, a demonic grimacing representation with fangs and a vertical third eye on the forehead, is carved on the back of the halo.

Just a short time after Vasudeva's passing, the Kushana empire began to decline. After Vasudeva, his son (?) Kanishka II lost to the Sassanians all the lands west of the Indus River. Sassanian princes who ruled over this area went by the title of Kushanshahs and issued coins with both Kushana and Sassanian influences. Provinces east of the Indus River, Taxila (modern Pakistan), Punjab, and the area surrounding Mathura (northern India) made up the Kingdom of Kanishka II. Goddess Ardoksho (Laxmi) on reverse, minted at Mathura, and Shiva and Nandi on reverse, minted at Taxila, are the two different types of his coins.

Kanishka II⁷²:

228-250 AD



Stater

Weight: 7.8 gm

Gold

Obverse: King Sacrificing at Altar with his right hand, he is holding a trident in his left hand, in left field a Brahmi Akshara *Ga* is shown while in right field another Brahmi Akshara *Pri* is present. Legend in bactrian at the edge.

Reverse: Three-headed Shiva standing with his vehicle Nandi, Bactrian legend is at the edge, *OHPO* is on his left.

Reference: Gobl#635.7, ONS#156 (**this specimen**)

⁷² <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

The reverse of the majority of the coins struck by Kanishka II depicts the goddess Ardochsho or Ardoxo (Laxmi in later eras) sitting. Except for specimen #635.7, which features a three-headed Shiva, which is the only coin of Kanishka II that does (as shown above), he minted a few Shiva-depicting coins (as catalogued by Prof. Robert Gobl #635) as regular issues. As opposed to his forefathers, Kanishka II and the kings who came after him (Vasudeva II, Vashishka, Shaka, and many others) had Bramhi characters engraved on their coins.

One of the last significant kings of the Kushana dynasty was Vashishka. Above is a picture of his coin with Shiva on it. The Kushana empire had completely broken up into a few smaller kingdoms after Vashishka. Due to the rise of the powerful Gupta emperors by the fourth century AD, this dynasty completely vanished from history.

Vashishka⁷³:

250-268 AD



⁷³ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

Stater, Weight: 7.85 gm, Gold

Obverse: Vasishka, nimbate and helmeted, standing facing, head left, sacrificing over the altar to left and holding filleted standard; to left, filleted trident behind, "Jira" to right of the altar, "Gho" between Vasishka's feet, "Ku?" to left and "Rada" to right of sceptre in Brahmi

Reverse: Shiva standing facing, holding diadem and trident; behind, the bull Nandi standing left; to left, a dot (•) above *tamgha*.

Reference: MK 630; MACW 3505 corr. ("Ku?" present, but not mentioned).

Magra⁷⁴:

4th century AD, Contemporary of Samudragupta?



Stater, Weight: 7.76 gm, Gold

Obverse: King standing, wearing late Kushana style loose-fitting garment, heavy boots on his feet. He is seen sacrificing at Altar with his right hand, but in his left arm, he holds instead of the long-handled trident, a staff topped with a Chakra or

⁷⁴ <https://sites.google.com/view/indiancoinsandhistory/coins-of-kushana-dynasty>

Wheel. The legend is totally corrupted Bactrian, copied from the late Kushana gold staters. The legend *Magra* in *Brahmi* is on the right of the staff.

Reverse: Ardoxsho, very similar to later Kushan

Reference: Gobl#578; MK 578 ("Usurper I"); Donum Burns 744

Magra is regarded as a leader of the "Later Kushana Dynasty," though he may have actually been the leader of the Rebellion since the Kushana era was nearly over. This gold stater is very important; Magra, who may have been the minter in the 4th century AD and may have been Samudragupta's contemporary, may have been. The obverse depicts the King standing, dressed in a loose-fitting garment in the late Kushana fashion, with heavy boots on his feet. He is pictured offering sacrifices at the altar with his right hand, but his left arm is holding a staff that is topped with a Chakra or Wheel rather than the long-handled trident. The legend was plagiarized from the late Kushana gold staters and is completely corrupted by Bactrian. The name of the King, Magra, is written in a legible Brahmi legend to the right of the staff. Ardoxsho, who resembles later Kushana very much, is on the reverse. This coin is thought to have served as a prototype for Samudragupta's Kacha series of gold coins, which feature him carrying a "Chakra" or wheel. It is not all that surprising given how much Kushana influenced Samudragupta's coinage. This coin has a fascinating history and is very uncommon.

Chapter 6

Legends on Kushana Coins

The representation of regal and religious imagery, as well as the language, tales, and the execution of inscriptions, are only a few ways that early Kushana coinage demonstrates its affinity and syncretism with earlier currency patterns. The Kushans carried on the ancient Greek customs that the Greco-Bactrians had already accepted, including the frequent use of the Greek language on Bactrian coins. By utilising bilingual inscriptions on their coins, the Kushans continued previous earlier traditions by adhering to the Indo-Greek customs used south of the Hindu Kush. The languages used south of the Hindu Kush were predominantly Greek for the obverse type and Prakrit⁷⁵ for the reverse. The Kharoshthi script was first used for coinage by the Indo-Greeks, and then by the Indo-Scythians and Indo-Parthians in their respective territories. This script was used extensively in northern India and the adjacent areas, as well as in the Indus, Swat, and Kabul valleys. Evidence of this can be seen in the coinage of the Western Kshatrapas and Chashtana, whose coins from 78-130 CE⁷⁶ were inscribed in three writing systems: Greek, Brahmi and Kharoshthi. Among all the significant ancient civilizations in the region, the Indo-Scythians and the Kushans played a vital role in the introduction and diffusion of Kharoshthi legend in India and later on in ancient Bactria.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ "The language of Indic inscription". The Prakrit or Middle Indo-Aryan (MIA) language was the only inscriptional language from the third to first century BC, which endured as a common language for coinage for more than two centuries. For a detailed discussion of Indian epigraphy see Salomon 1998.

⁷⁶ Errington and Sarkhosh Curtis 2007: 62.

⁷⁷ Salomon refers to some discoveries of Kharoshthi inscriptions found north of Hindu Kush, such as those discovered in Qundoz, as well as other evidence from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Salomon 1998: 42-45 and 152-154.

Greco-Bactrian to Early Kushana Legends:

Greek legends are typically found on both the obverse and reverse varieties of Greco-Bactrian coins that were minted north of the Hindu Kush. However, this is not the case for the obverse of Eucratides (Figure 1) and Heliocles (Figure 2) imitation types issued perhaps by Yuezhi or Kujula Kadphises (AD 40-90), the first early Kushana king.⁷⁸ The obverses of the general issue (Figure 3), Heliocles imitation (Figure 4) and the helmeted type (Figure 5) issued by Vima Takto/Soter Megas (AD 90–113) in Bactria were also devoid of a Greek legend. While the Prakrit language, written in Kharoshthi script, typically emerged on the reverse sides and around religious pictures north of the Hindu Kush, the Greek legend surrounding the royal figure was exclusively employed on the obverse type. There are a few exceptions, such as the We/ Ardochsho type of Vima Takto/ Soter Megas issued in Gandhara (Figure 6) and the bust-and-Zeus type issued in Mathura (Figure 7), both of which bear only the Greek legend on the reverse type and, respectively, have no inscription on either the obverse or reverse types. This is consistent with the Begram-issued, single-language copper drachm of Vima Kadphises (AD 113–127), which has no legend on the reverse side but a Greek inscription surrounding the royal portrait on the obverse (Figure 8). The name and title of the monarch, indicating his political and religious standing, are both featured on the coins struck in Bactria and south of the Hindu Kush.

It should be remembered that during the early Kushana period, the name and title of the recently deceased monarch who came before might occasionally take their place. This is evident in the case of the Hermaios imitation series (Figure 9), which

⁷⁸ This is an approximate time limit since the actual date for the beginning of the Kanishka era is still a controversial and much-disputed subject within the field of Kushana numismatics. This problem has affected the absolute chronology of the Kushana period. This study has refrained from delving into the ongoing speculation surrounding chronology and instead cautiously adopts the reign of Kanishka according to the most widely accepted dating of 127 AD for the first year of the Kanishka era. For more information concerning chronology and different school of thoughts see: Göbl 1967: 269-312, 1968: 3-113, 1993:77-86, 1999: 151-171; Schindel 2004: 245-248, 2005: 217-242, 2014: 27-30, as well 2016 123-132; Cribb 1990: 151-193, 1999: 177-205, Falk 2001: 121–136.

was issued south of the Hindu Kush by Kujula Kadphises and bears the name and the title of Hermaios in the obverse and reverse legends.⁷⁹ Zeionises name appeared on the obverse of the Kujula Kadphises bull and camel type (Figure 10), which was modelled after the coinage of the Indo-Scythian king Zeionises (AD 20–40). A copper tetradrachm of Vima Takto/Soter Megas that was issued north of the Hindu Kush in the name of Heliocles is another illustration of the ongoing practice of creating copycat issues in the name of the former monarch (Figure 4). However, Vima Takto/Soter Megas distinguished his coin from the Heliocles copycat series produced by the Yuezhi and later Kujula Kadphises north of the Hindu Kush by identifying himself on this piece with the four-pronged *tamga*, the symbol of Soter Megas, on the horse's rump.

The coins issued independently and merely in the name of Kujula Kadphises can be classified into a couple of series, including the rare Eucratides imitation type (Figure 11), which bears his name in Greek on the reverse; and the Hermaios imitation series issued in his name and containing both the name and title in Greek and Prakrit on the obverse and reverse respectively.⁸⁰ Similarly to this, the name and title are written in Greek and Prakrit on the obverse and reverse faces of the Roman type (Figure 12), the cross-legged stance, as well as the warrior type. Additionally, one of the uncommon Kujula Kadphises (the type with wings) produced in Sind was identified by the Greek title on the obverse and the name and title in Prakrit written in Kharoshthi script on the reverse (Figure 13).

Following Kujula Kadphises, his son Vima Takto/Soter Megas issued coins that exhibited an almost uniform Greek inscription of the title ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΣΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΓΑΣ, “King of Kings Great Savior”. Two of his issues, however, are

⁷⁹ According to the classification of Bopearachchi, from group IX (joint coinage of Hermaios and Kujula) onwards the name of Kujula appeared on the coinage. Bopearachchi 1991: 124.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*

two exceptions: the horseman and Zeus type, which exhibits the identical Greek title on the obverse and his personal name alongside his political title in Kharoshthi on the reverse (Figure 14); and the bull and camel type (Figure 15), which displays a blundered Greek inscription of Zeionises on the obverse and the political and religious title in Kharoshthi on reverse.⁸¹ With the exception of the monolingual bronze issue of Vima Kadphises (Figure 8), he issued bilingual copper and gold coins with his name and imperial appellation on the reverse. His copper issues bear his name ΟΔΗΜΟ ΚΑΔΦΙΣΗΣ after the identical political title, ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΣΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΓΑΣ (Figure 16), which was also employed by his father, Vima Takto. The shorter version of this title has been applied to his gold issues: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΘΗΜΟ ΚΑΔΦΙΣΗΣ.⁸²

The copper issues served as inspiration for the design elements used in the gold coins, and it is only via an understanding of the copper issues that we can determine how the gold coins were created. Therefore, it has been suggested that Vima Kadphises' coins commenced with the copper issues and that the gold issues followed later on.⁸³ The fact that all gold coins include a Kharoshthi legend on the reverse side supports this theory more than the early monolingual bronze coins of Vima Kadphises, which only had a Greek legend.

Early Kushana Legends:

The conversion of the Greek and Kharoshthi scripts into the Bactrian language, carried out by Kanishka, was one of the most notable advancements to occur during the Kushana period. However, the first Kanishka issue features the king's name and title in Greek (Figure 18), and as a result, Bactrian traditions continued

⁸¹ For the progression of early Kushana royal names and appellations, language and scripts see Table 1.

⁸² Jongeward and Cribb 2015: 54.

⁸³ Bracey 2009: 42.

employing the Greek alphabet (Figure 19). The use of Greek as an "official language" in Bactria was afterwards prohibited. This practice of changing the language from Greek to Bactrian also accords with the reverse types of Kanishka's coins, which, on the earlier issues, give the name of the deities in Greek and progressively take up the Bactrian language.⁸⁴

Researchers have been trying to figure out reasons for the language change from Greek to Bactrian during the reign of Kanishka over the past few decades. According to Gerard Fussman, Kanishka's "anti-Greek" stance is clear from his choice to switch the language from Greek to Bactrian. This mindset may also be seen in the Rabatak inscription, which elaborates on the Kushans' propensity toward "Iranianizing" Iran by highlighting their close ties to the Iranian culture and language. Fussman stated that the transition from Greek to Bactrian represents a final stage of the Hellenistic presence in Bactria."⁸⁵

Robert Göbl likewise considered the development of the language from the initial Greek legend to the Bactrian names, titles and the deities' names attested on the Kanishka coins as a similar transitional phase from the "Greek-only" coinage to that written in Kharoshthi script as on the coins of Vima Kadphises.⁸⁶ Göbl also suggested that the Greek-language Kanishka coins were produced earlier than other Kanishka coins. Proof of this is offered by unique gold staters of Kanishka on which the Greek inscription has been overstruck with the Bactrian legend.⁸⁷ Greek was undoubtedly Kanishka's initial choice, and it may have served as the Kushana Empire's first official language, according to observations like those of Joe Cribb.

⁸⁴ Sims-Williams 1989: 344-349.

⁸⁵ Fussman 1974: 313-322.

⁸⁶ Göbl 1984: 61-62.

⁸⁷ Göbl 1960: 94-96. In Fig. 1 the traces of overstriking the Bactrian legend on the Greek one is quite visible. It should also be noted that in 1961, Göbl proved his earlier observation through paleographic analysis. Cf. Göbl 1961: 93-116. Further to this, he initially proposed that the Greek language coins were issued in Bactria, in the Balkh mint, due to the stylistic resemblance of these coins with the Vima Kadphises issues; cf. Göbl 1983: 85, however, in his comprehensive contribution of 1984 he associated the coin with the Peshawar mint; cf. Göbl 1984: 22-23. This view has been questioned by Tanabe, who argued that the earliest Greek issues of Kanishka were minted in Bactria due to the Hellenistic features displayed on the Greek language coins of Kanishka that make them more fitting to Balkh, "where the central Asian Hellenistic tradition was preserved better than anywhere else." Cf. Tanabe 1995: 203-204.

Bactrian was subsequently utilized as a "local translation" language within Bactria for all government documents. He offered a similar theory, stating that the Greek may have been utilized for some regionally specialized functions while the Bactrian language may have served as the Empire's administrative language. Prakrit was used by the Kushans with the same attitude toward linguistic evolution. In the northwest provinces, the Prakrit language was written in the Kharoshthi script, and in the Indian regions, it was written in the Brahmi script.

It should be stressed that there is not sufficient evidence to make conclusive statements concerning the broad range of languages used in different parts of the Empire; however, the use of Bactrian on a broad variety of Kanishka's coinages implies that this language served an administrative function during the Kushana period.⁸⁸ Even yet, it is obvious that coins serve as a political statement from the person who issued them. Therefore, it becomes sense that Kanishka wanted to utilize one distinctive language throughout his entire Empire to show off his political clout and his ties to the Iranian culture. Comparing the way language was used and changed during the Kushana Empire's rule to that of the Achaemenid Empire is instructive, as are any potential parallels between Darius' and Kanishka's political ideas. The Aramaic language was adopted by the Achaemenids for formal administrative functions; it was spoken in their royal court and served as "their linguistic gateway to the world". They chose Aramaic because it was a language used throughout the Babylonian as well as the Assyrian empires; thus it already had served as a lingua franca of the western satrapies of the Achaemenid empire.⁸⁹

Darius understood the importance of establishing a universal language for intergovernmental correspondence since he was fully aware of the variety of languages spoken throughout his vast realm. All political records and official

⁸⁸ Cf. Cribb 1998: 86.

⁸⁹ Tavernier 2013: 652.

correspondence transmitted to and received from the various satrapies were translated from Old Persian into Aramaic. This shift is made evident in the Behistun inscription which was inscribed in three languages - Old Persian, Akkadian and Elamite - although copies of the inscription were written in Aramaic on papyri and leather in order to disseminate the Great King's message throughout the empire.⁹⁰ Similar to the Achaemenid empire, the Kushans had a sizable population made up of a variety of cultures and languages. Similar to the Achaemenids, Kanishka instituted a policy that allowed all of his subjects to use Bactrian as a common tongue. The Kushans used this language for administrative reasons throughout the empire during the reign of Kanishka. Similarly, some documents were translated into local scripts, as illustrated in the official Brahmi inscriptions at the *Mat devakula* (sanctuary) in Mathura.⁹¹ Given everything that has been said thus far, it would seem that the current findings go against those of Fussman, who thought that the switch from Greek to Bactrian was a sign of Kanishka's "anti-Greek attitude" and a deliberate political decision to alter the Empire's language. This, however, might be explained by a deliberate linguistic adjustment made by Kanishka during his rule. This might have shown his intimate ties to Iranian identity while also allowing his vast, multilingual Empire to communicate on an administrative level using a common language. This does not necessarily imply that he was against the Greek language, which was to be employed by his successors and had been in use for centuries prior to him. This could be explained by the fact that he wrote the legends on his Bactrian coins in the Greek language and used the Greek alphabet for them. If his decision about the language was really driven by anti-Greek sentiment, it might have surfaced early on in his rule. These considerations may thus help to explain the somewhat

⁹⁰ Shaked 1987: 251.

⁹¹ For further information concerning the content of the inscriptions in Mat see: cf. Daya Ram Sahni 1924: 399-406; Lüders 1961: 138-45; Rosenfield 1967: 135-153; Sims-Williams and Falk 2014: Kushana Dynasty ii. Inscriptions of the Kushans in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

significant association between Kushana society's desire to establish a new administrative language and the adoption of a somewhat novel political strategy.

The Kushana society may have undergone a process of adaptation and acculturation as a result of interactions with various other cultures that existed in the Empire, which may also have contributed to this change.

Late Kushana Legends:

The names and titles that appear on the coins of Kanishka's successors adhere to a similar tradition and use the Greek script Kanishka established for the Bactrian language. The introduction of a Brahmi monogram, which is first attested on the obverse and reverse fields of the last issues of Vasudeva I's gold coins (AD 190-227) and later on the copper and gold issues of Kanishka II (AD 227-246), however, marked the emergence of a new pattern in the inscriptions on Kushana coinage (Figure 20). This practice became canonical under Vasudeva II (AD 280-320), who inscribed not only his name and title in Bactrian but also the first letters of his name, VASU, are shown as a Brahmi monogram in the right field of his obverse type⁹² (Figure 21). All his successors adopted the analogous practice of reemphasizing the initial part of their name as a Brahmi monogram on the obverse field⁹³ (Figure 22). Following Kanishka's legacy of using a Bactrian inscription on coins, usage gradually decreased throughout the later Kushana period. This is demonstrated by the incomplete or absent Bactrian legend found on the gold and copper issues of Kanishka II, respectively. The corrupted, incomplete version of the Bactrian legend was followed by the legends on the Vasishka and Kanishka III coins. In the end, the Bactrian legend is only faintly discernible or completely

⁹² Errington and Cribb 1992: 70, coin no. 43, 73; cf. also Burn 1984: 54-66, 1985: 55-71; as well as Jongeward and Cribb 2015: 171-173, and on the copper issues coin no. 1651.

⁹³ Jongeward and Cribb 2015: 6, 174-178.

absent on Vasudeva II's gold coins as opposed to the copper ones. Nevertheless, the practice of using the Bactrian legend was maintained and later featured on the Kushano-Sasanian, Kidarite and Alchan coinage issued in north and south of the Hindu Kush.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Vondrovec 2008: 32.

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